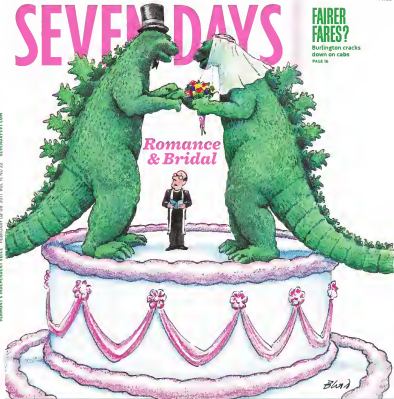


SEVEN DAYS

FAIRER FARES?

Burlington cracks
down on cabs
PAGE 16

Romance & Bridal



SMOKIN' FAVORS

PAGE 28

Hand-rolled cigars on the big day



SINGLE FILE

PAGE 30

Seven Days daters tell all



FOOD SWINGS

PAGE 48

Montpelier's culinary changes



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Evil or Mentally Ill?

Last month, six people died and 13 more were wounded in a shooting spree at a supermarket in Tucson, Ariz., where Rep. Gabrielle Giffords was holding a constituent event. Accused gunman Jared Loughner has since been charged with attempted assassination of a federal official.

Commentators across the country have speculated about what led to the shootings, repeatedly referring to them as 'evil.' Last week, Burlington playwright James Lantz penned a personal essay in which he argues that Loughner isn't evil — he's mentally ill. The essay appeared on *Blurt*, the *Seven Days* staff blog.

"I know mental illness," writes Lantz. "I've seen it up close and unleashed. And the more I read about this young man, the more I realize the more it sounds eerily similar to somebody I once knew, and his whole years earlier. The tragedy last month was not the result of failed parenting, weak gun laws, a bad community college or inflated national rhetoric. Instead, the sound heard in Tucson on that sunny Saturday morning was the great snap of our weak commitment to the mentally ill breaking, and this time it broke bad."

Read Lantz's essay at sevendaysvt.com and read about Gov. Shumlin's proposed cuts to Vermont's mental health services in this week's "Face Game" on p. 12.

facing facts



LAST SHOT

Vermont's only professional football team — the *Green Mountain Goats* — finally buckled under financial pressure. Along with several other teams, the franchise was sold to a new owner.



HELP SQUARE!

Burlington police reports a "verbal paper" has already been filed for a woman in the town center. What's the deal? — *green don't*



VERMONT IS FOR RECYCLING

The state's new law, which requires all businesses to recycle, is a good thing. But it's also a good thing that the state's new law is a good thing. But it's also a good thing that the state's new law is a good thing.



BAND UP!

An eleven-year-old band will keep on rockin' in the Burlington area. The band is called "The Burlington Band" and they are a good thing. But it's also a good thing that the band is a good thing.

PHOTOGRAPH BY JESSICA KAPLAN

840

That's how many Facebook users are fans of the page "Hiking Back North Vermont." Loughner is a Burlington member whose Facebook profile was removed after he posted photos of himself on the hiking trail, according to the *Burlington Reflector*.

TOP FIVE

HOT SPOTS IN VERMONT

1. "Huge New Production for One Energy — With Real" by Lauren Clay. Hope is in the air. See *Seven Days* for more on this new production.
2. "We'll Get the Record" by Don Voss. The record is in the air. See *Seven Days* for more on this new production.
3. "The Vermont State Bill Ready for Recycling" by Don Voss. Vermont's 30-year-old recycling program is being expanded this year — or so it seems.
4. "The Game: Vermont and the Mountain" by Don Voss. The game is on. See *Seven Days* for more on this new production.
5. "The Winner" by Don Voss. The winner is in. See *Seven Days* for more on this new production.

blogworthy last week...

[SEVENDAYSVT.COM/BLOG](http://sevendaysvt.com/blog)



LOB "Loughner's last shot" is a good thing. But it's also a good thing that the state's new law is a good thing.



VER A good thing is a good thing. But it's also a good thing that the state's new law is a good thing.



OUTM "Out of the Mountain" is a good thing. But it's also a good thing that the state's new law is a good thing.



VER "Vermont is for Recycling" is a good thing. But it's also a good thing that the state's new law is a good thing.



VER "Vermont is for Recycling" is a good thing. But it's also a good thing that the state's new law is a good thing.

tweet of the week:

@mckenzie
This new record is a good thing. But it's also a good thing that the state's new law is a good thing.

PHOTOGRAPH BY JESSICA KAPLAN

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MUST SEE MUST DO THIS WEEK

COMPILED BY CAROLYN FOX

SATURDAY 5

Hire and Higher

Let's pretend *Junkie* Temora Egan was your best friend. With F.I.C.H. events, ranging from the 2020 American Music Awards Best New and Emerging Artist to one of FOGS 25 Most Stylish Musicians in the World in 2020, you'd want to interview the diva. Luckily, she's just as good in person as on paper. Meet her at 10-time art-gallery art Higher Creative's Terrace Lounge this weekend.

SEE OUR RAVE GUIDE 60

Top of Sunshine

When the *Caroline Chocolate Drops* formed in 2005, its three members regularly polished their craft by jamming with a do-do-do in a garage. All respect for the history of string-band music shines throughout their repertoire of toe-tapping, down-home "string music" as "Carolinians" and "Bluegrassers."

"It's like transforming the Blues. Once you get into an old-time dance hall on Saturday with tunes that will make your toes tap."

SEE IT OFF ON PAGE 60

2

FRIDAY

Sound Clinics

If you want to hear and understand the music of the world, using musical instruments is a good option for the 2020 Live Series. The first of the series is "Sound Clinics" featuring the 2020 Live Series. The first of the series is "Sound Clinics" featuring the 2020 Live Series. The first of the series is "Sound Clinics" featuring the 2020 Live Series.

SEE CALENDAR LISTING ON PAGE 10

SATURDAY 5

Stamping Grounds

4

With an artist-in-residence program, a 10th annual *Seawater Festival* offers heaps of opportunities for stamping through seawater from guided nature immersion walks to a night building and flying kites. Card back's last weekly while leaving him to soaking the campfire.

SEE CALENDAR LISTING ON PAGE 60

ONGOING

Spectacular Spectacular

5

Last summer, Shelburne Museum brought us "Curio Day in America: 1870-1950." Now, 10th of the Museum of Art offers a new look at "Curio Day in America: 1870-1950." The big top, a new art of Curio in America, "Seagun Research" Curio de L'Esprit (L'Esprit) and "Masked Spectacle" Curio de L'Esprit and "Puppet" Curio de L'Esprit. Here's a new opportunity to run away to the big top.

SEE ART REVIEW ON PAGE 20

WEDNESDAY 8

Catch the Buzz

6

If you heart *Beats Like a Hammer*, on the set, you'll likely wonder what instrument produces the same sound and sound in the spirit of electronic landscapes. At that moment to actually the human in an engaged in the sound of a human that is a song. See it to believe it.

SEE CALENDAR SPECT LIGHT ON PAGE 10

SATURDAY 5

Weather or Not

7

The theme of the day is to make up the weather. The first of the series is "Weather or Not" featuring the 2020 Live Series. The first of the series is "Weather or Not" featuring the 2020 Live Series. The first of the series is "Weather or Not" featuring the 2020 Live Series.

SEE CALENDAR LISTING ON PAGE 10

everything else...

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3

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Money Madness

Last March, the five Democratic candidates for governor promised hundreds of individuals with disabilities — along with their parents and advocates — they wouldn't let mean old Gov. **ANDREW** reduce their services.

Fast forward 10 months. Those of these Democrats are now defending a budget proposal that would cut another \$5 million from the state's community mental health and developmental disability system. We're talking about Gov. **PETER NOONAN**, Human Services Secretary **DOUG HARRIS** and top Shustins aide **SHAWN BARTLETT**.

Here's what the trio had to say less than a year ago.

Shustins: "We do this group therapy session once or twice a week, and this is definitely the largest group we've been yet. That's because the people in that room have more at stake in this election than anyone else in Vermont."

To much applause, Kucine added, "I don't believe our values are negotiable just because we're in difficult times."

Kucine promised the legislature would not "pass a budget that leaves you by the side of the road."

Over the past three years, the state's \$400 million-plus mental health support system has absorbed \$10 million in cuts, according to **JAN TRONER**, executive director of Vermont Council of Developmental and Mental Health Services. The council represents the region of mental health providers and was the sponsor of last year's March event.

The trio has since changed its tune. Shustins is upset about \$1 million in corrections savings that will go into substance abuse, housing and counseling services, but admits he and Kucine will be working with community mental health providers to "mitigate the pain as much as possible." Kucine hopes to help find "efficiencies" in the system.

Troner said health providers have already absorbed the cost of technology upgrades, home visits and burgeoning health insurance costs without help from the state or feds.

"The hospitals and health care insurance companies, on the other hand, have asked for and been granted rate increases to cover their cuts," said Troner. "Also, there is emphasis on support for prevention and primary care in health care, and that is what we're doing on the mental health side. That's what makes it hard to

understand these proposed cuts."

The budget cuts, if approved, would boost caseloads for mental health workers from 35 to nearly 60 in some parts of the state. What loss for outpatient services would increase from weeks to months, Troner said. It will also mean that many adults now living independently would get less support and be at greater risk of ending up back in group homes, hospitalized — or worse.

FLOYD NEASE, executive director of the consumer-based Vermont Association for Mental Health, said he was "shocked" by Shustins's budget proposal. As House Majority Leader, Nease led the charge against Douglas' budget cuts because of their potential impact on the most vulnerable.

**WE COULD CHOOSE
PEOPLE OVER
PAVEMENT.**

**FLOYD NEASE
VERMONT ASSOCIATION
FOR MENTAL HEALTH**

The state should redirect some of the \$42 million being saved by cancelled plans to build a 12-bed secure residential mental health facility on regional mental health services, Nease said.

He also has another suggestion: "I know this sounds odd coming from a guy who helped get three bridges replaced in his district, but you could stop all optional paving projects and not have to make these cuts," said Nease. "We could choose people over pavements."

Meeting of the Mayors

Last week's bipartisan regional Burlington Telecon was so much about the 2012 mayor's race as about a beleaguered municipal telecom that over 100 mayors SIP'ed in.

Co-moderators **DAVID PAUL** (3-Ward 8), **JOHN SHANAHAN** (10-Ward 5) and **JOHN WELSH** (3-Ward 4) — all considered possible mayoral candidates — took great

pains to distance themselves from the RT debacle, while lobbing hot shots at Burlington Mayor **HOWARD**.

Despite calls for his resignation and demands that he apologize to voters, Kim didn't rise to the bait — or even miss his voice.

Each of the three "candidate" counselors did his or her best to represent the "trouper."

Shanahan reminded residents that the council took the lead in creating a Blue Ribbon Panel, a special audit committee to review the city's 2009 RT. In fact, it also disavowed RT's use of the cash-pool.

Paul took Kim to task for spreading misinformation. The mayor continues to claim that RT would now be financially stable if the administration had been allowed to negotiate a deal with Piper Jaffray in late 2009. Even the consultants hired to audit RT around adopted that notion was folly.

That the council went along with some of Kim and Chief Administrative Officer **ANDREW LEOPOLD** plans should not be seen as an act of complicity. Wright warned, "Could we have figured this thing out?" asked Wright. "It was a trust issue. We trusted that the administration was not doing what we later found out it was."

Wright urged Kim to admit "serious mistakes were made" as a way to rebuild trust in city government.

Kim didn't waver, insisting that he and Leopold have only had the city's best interests in mind.

Off the Block

The 44 residents at Wharf Lane in Burlington were spared eviction last week as the very day it was scheduled to happen. The Burlington Housing Authority and the Vermont Housing Finance Agency brokered a deal to buy both Wharf Lane and neighboring Bobbin Mill apartments from Patazang Properties, according to **ANNA BITTMAN**, BHA's executive director.

Dettman said the agreement — to be signed online officially this week — was a near-term purchase of Wharf Lane with a closing on the Bobbin Mill no later than December 2012.

One clarification in last week's column, I misread the annual review of Patazang Properties — not Patazang Properties. Although the former company still owns the facility, now it is a new employer-owned. The

Why Four Peruvian "Workers" Couldn't Wait to Leave Vermont

BY KEN PICKARD



Foto Rodriguez and T. van Willem.

Ivana Foto Rodriguez and the hotel no longer want getting rich when she signed a contract to spend three months working in a Montpelier cafe in the winter — during her summer vacation. The 23-year-old university student from Lima, Peru, and she expected to make enough money to cover her travel expenses, plus maybe a little extra to see the United States.

But Foto Rodriguez' experience was anything but a vacation. Her contract, with an out-of-state company that sponsored her visa, guaranteed her at least 40 hours of work each week, or about \$1200 each month. But Foto Rodriguez claimed that her Montpelier employer, Sansoniana Caffe, never lived up to its obligation, and often gave her less than half the hours she'd been promised.

Cafe proprietor Paul Nihilolema also guaranteed Foto Rodriguez "suitable or commensurate." But she found herself using 12 foreign workers living in a five-bedroom, one-bathroom house in Farm City. Though men and women shared the house, Nihilolema claimed, there were no doors on the bedrooms, and the bathroom didn't have a lock. She and Nihilolema would often show

up unannounced in the house and bedrooms.

Foto Rodriguez expected to be "bunking" with another woman. She didn't think that meant they'd be sharing a mattress on the floor. In another room, three women shared another single mattress.

"Why am I supposed to sleep in the same bed with this woman? She's a complete stranger to me," Foto Rodriguez complained. "So I ended up sleeping on the couch," she said.

Foto Rodriguez' allegations were echoed by three of her other Peruvian women coworkers for the story. All were employed by Sansoniana and just last week, when a fellow Peruvian, now a permanent Vermont resident living in Franklin County, "testified" about their situation and took them into her home.

The four Peruvians, all university students from Lima, on summer break, expressed bitterness, disappointment and anger at the way they'd been treated in Vermont. Each said she paid more than \$1000 for the opportunity to come to the United States under the federal J-1 Summer Work Travel Program, which allows foreign students to work here for as long as four months.

According to U.S. state department spokespersons, the program has exploded in popularity in recent years, growing from 54,700 participants in 2005 to 180,000 in 2010. The state department doesn't keep track of where the program participants live and work.

Nor does the Vermont Department of Labor monitor how many J-1 visa holders are currently employed in the state — though anecdotal evidence suggests many foreign students are coming to Vermont to work in the state's ski resorts, hotels, cruise ships and other tourism-related businesses.

It doesn't always go well. A recent Associated Press investigation revealed widespread abuses in the J-1 visa program. Lured by the promise of well-paying jobs and the opportunity to live and travel in the United States, many overseas students fork over thousands of dollars to private, third-party brokers to provide them with work and housing, only to find they've signed up for overcrowded living arrangements and disreputable, potentially illegal employment.

The AP investigation also noted that some J-1 visa holders were placed in strip clubs when they expected to be working in restaurants. Some student workers were paid less than \$1 per hour, while others were forced to sleep in shifts because their housing arrangements had no bedrooms. Some students were so overworked

employment arrangements "didn't even ask out" because of his delays in opening a new cafe in Montpelier, where he'd expected them to work. That setback also reduced his need for workers in the industrial kitchen he operates in Wisconsin.

Nihilolema claimed that, as soon as he realized there wasn't enough work for the Peruvians, he contacted the agency that sponsored their J-1 visas — American Work Experience of Greenwich, Conn. — and asked that they be reassigned to another employer, or even another state.

"A few of them had already left and went to other states," he asserted, adding that it was his first experience using the J-1 visa program.

The Peruvian women said Nihilolema's inexperience with the program is to blame for the way they were treated. They said he should have worked with their sponsor, AWE, to correct the problems.

"We treated the company that we were going to work with somebody with experience in this kind of exchange program," said Nidra Frequentago, a

20-year-old college student from Lima. "But when we got here, our employer told us it was the first time he'd ever done something like this." Not only was the girls unable to work other jobs — they lacked

We hate Vermont.
Why did he BRING us
here if he d On't h Awe
WORK FOR eveRyBODY?

STAFFAN BUESS GULLA

Social Security numbers — but they had no transportation in and out of there and often resorted to hitchhiking to get to work and back.

Frequentago had many of the same complaints as Foto Rodriguez. Though her contract clearly specified that she'd get at least 40 hours of work each week, some weeks she spent fewer than eight hours at Sansoniana. Her last paycheck, dated January 27, was for \$18.23 for a two-week period.

Nihilolema wouldn't disclose how much he paid his employees, though his most recent pay stub for the four Peruvian women indicates a rate of \$8.15 per hour, which complies with

LABOR

Vermont's current minimum-wage law. Nibbelens denied he charged the women anything for their accommodations, which he described as "very good," he said he invested \$10,000 in new furniture for the house in Barre City, which he owns.

However, copies of the four women's pay stubs, provided to *Seven Days* last week, reveal a \$100 "cash advance" deducted from each one. When asked about the \$200-per-person charges, Nibbelens explained that they covered the cost of utilities, including electricity, cable TV and Internet access.

According to the Vermont Department of Labor, it's illegal for employers to withhold more than \$50 per month from a worker's paycheck to cover housing expenses. An employer may charge more for housing, but it can't be automatically deducted from the wages.

Who \$200 worth of the price the women paid? A Barre City fire inspector visited the house in December after one of the residents filed no complaint. According to Barre City Fire Chief Tim Bartholmer, the inspector found no major fire-code violations, but did confirm that a lot of people were living there. No citations could be issued, since Barre City has no minimum-occupancy standards for private homes.

Nibbelens admitted that, for a "short time," he had his employees living in the house at 39 Beckley Street. However, he denied that the bedroom locked doors and the bathroom had no lock. Asked whether his guests were forced to share beds, Nibbelens just laughed.

"They're young girls! They wanted to stay together," he said. "They didn't want me to separate them. They cried!"

Nibbelens's contract with American Work Experience apparently didn't include any oversight of the workers' housing. An AFGE spokesperson wouldn't comment on the situation in Montpelier or answer any questions about the company itself. "We've adopted a policy of not talking to reporters anymore," the spokesperson said. The company website describes it as a "fully designed sponsor of J-1 cultural exchange programs."

But the performance and compliance chief at the Vermont Department of Labor recently opened an investigation into Seneca's labor practices. She wouldn't comment on her findings.

The staff of Seneca Stadium is also aware of, but wouldn't comment

on, the Seneca's situation, calling it ongoing "contract services."

Nicole Thompson, a state department spokesperson, said her office is aware of the systemic problems with the J-1 visa program and recently adopted an improved "vetting process" for employers who want to participate in it. The department has increased its monitoring of agencies that arrange for J-1 visas, of which there are about 1450 nationwide. Thompson said she was aware of any specific complaints about Vermont employers.

**LORENA POLI PINILLOS
FOUND HERSELF AMONG
11 FOREIGN WORKERS
LIVING IN A FIVE-BEDROOM,
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ON THE BEDROOMS
AND THE BATHROOM
DIDN'T HAVE A LOCK.**

Shortly before press time, the Franklin County Prisoner women who "rescued" the four young women last week notified *Seven Days* that Nibbelens had purchased four plane tickets so the women could leave Vermont.

"It's not about the money," Nibbelens explained. "I tried to do my best as a humanitarian. I'm a citizen of the world."

All four Prisoners left the state last weekend, but not before sharing their impressions of the time they spent here.

"We love Vermont," said Nadine Dacris-Corn, 20, as the others all nodded in agreement. "Why did he bring us here if he didn't love work for everybody?"

"I'd go to other states, but I wouldn't come here again," Pundarik added. "It's not just about the money. We're losing our vacations. Now we could be on a beach with our friends and family." ☺

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Burlington Cabbies Up in Arms About Proposed Meters

BY ANDY BROSMAGE



CHARTIS BROSAGE

Burlington City Councilor Emma Mahoney-Brosage (D-Ward 3) doesn't take taxis very often, but the verily recommends one very expensive ride from Notters to the Courtyard Marriott and back. Under the city's "zone system" of pricing, the six-block trip should have cost her \$6 or \$7. The cabbie charged her \$14.

The situation hasn't changed much over the years. In 2006, a *Seven Days* investigation documented what Burlington taxi riders have known for years: The zone system is routinely ignored and unenforced, meaning a cab fare from Point A to Point B can cost almost anything, depending upon the driver.

What's new is the city's response: A total rewrite of the tax regulations that would replace the zone system with meters. Draft regulations handed to the Burlington City Council this month

would also subject taxi drivers to random drug tests and biometric physicals, and crack down on bad habits that city officials say "are tolerated for far too long: cabbies smoking, watching porn, sleeping in parked taxis and driving sloppily for example."

Mahoney-Brosage, who also sits on the city's Taxi Licensing Board, says the new regulations come in response to "chronic complaints" — often from cabbie drivers — about poor pricing, a glut of firms on city streets, collusive behavior and a lack of enforcement of the existing rules.

"Right now it's a little bit like the Wild West out there," says Mahoney-Brosage, who says the goal is to create "very consistent standards for drivers."

For cabbies, those "consistent standards" would mean no cellphones or "improper dress" such as exposed butts

shorts or exposed midriffs. No watching porn or "leaving" in the cab. Violators can already lose their tax license for such infractions. Under the new rules, they could also face fines as high as \$1000.

Queen City cabbies are facing about the proposed rules change, threatening to sue the city or pull out of Burlington altogether if it goes through. While many agree the system needs fixing, they view the city's solution as an "overreach" that will lead to a cabbie exodus.

"If the city is so bullheaded that they can't work with us, we just won't serve the city of Burlington," declares Paul Reber, owner of Burlington's largest taxi company, Railways Transportation. "We would take every legal action known to us to stand to fight them."

Reber admits the new system is widely abused, but he opposes switching to meters because, he claims, it would be more expensive for his customers. Under the new system, rides within Burlington now cost \$5.50 to \$14.50, depending on the distance. The 60-year-old taxi rules rather on meters of what Burlington zone rates would be. Fares would continue to be set by the city council, with adjustments pegged to federal transportation rates set by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Any time gas prices rise 25 percent in a six-month period, a two-thirds majority of the city council — at a petitioner's request — could adjust meter rates.

Today, rates for work fares in Burlington International

Airport are already required to be equipped with meters. Fares from

BTV are \$5.00 for the first two miles, plus \$2.25 per mile for the next eight miles and \$2.50 for every mile after that. The metered return rate usually works out to be more expensive than the zone-based one first brought to the plate.

At the January public hearing, one cabbie suggested the city meter rates be set at \$5 for the first mile and 50 cents for each additional quarter mile. "Anything less will result in an exodus from BTV," the cabbie said, meaning taxi drivers won't want enough to maintain their vehicles properly.

Today, new pricing only applies to rides that begin and end in Burlington. Customers who start or end their trips elsewhere are free to negotiate prices with cabbies. That's created a sort of free-market system for cab fares that taxi meters would do away with. Under the new regs,

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say trip that goes through Burlington may run on the meter rate, taking away a cab owner's ability to bargain.

Freddy Siskonen, an independent cab owner, reminded the city panel last month that the vast majority of cab business comes from permanent pickups, which have generated very few complaints about price gouging. Almost all the problems are coming from failed cabs, he said, so if the city wants to require meters, it should do so only for failed rides.

Not every cab in Burlington opposes the meters. Charles Horack, the co-owner of Green Cab Vt, a fleet of five alternative-fuel Toyotas, doesn't agree with every proposed rule change, but says the meters would be a huge improvement over the zone system. Right now, customers hailing cabs can't reliably predict how much their ride will cost, he says.

"It's right for someone to have a fair representation of the cost of a ride," Horack says.

Rohrer argues that the city should better reflect the regulations it has before enacting new ones, even while admitting that he has trouble keeping his own cabs in line. Rohrer tells *Seven Days* that the meter recently threatened to lose his company \$30,000 because drivers have been caught making their cabs "a car mess that's not a new hybrid. I can tell them they're not going to make, but it's a little harder and that's done," Rohrer says. Burlington police have jurisdiction over such, but Mulvey-Stanak admits it's not the department's top priority. To address that, the new regulations would require a "tax advisory group" made up of drivers, consumers and industry reps to oversee the ordinance. Mulvey-Stanak likens it to a "neighborhood watch."

"They'd be empowered to go up to a taxi driver, ask for their license, do a quick inspection to see if they're complying with the new ordinance," she explains. "They won't have the ability to issue tickets, but they can initiate a complaint process which would trigger an investigation or hearing to review the situation."

Rohrer's beef with the current state of Burlington's cab industry goes beyond what's addressed by the regulations. He complains of refugee taxi drivers who don't speak English and receive assistance from volunteer programs toward paying for their cabs and taxi licenses.

"You've got to be able to speak English, and you've got to know where you're going," Rohrer says, adding that when the ride is over, "They understand the money

They understand that, but they don't do anything about it."

The meter tax is another common complaint heard by the city, and Mulvey-Stanak says the new regulations would "likely" mean fewer licensed cabs, in part because new drug and health screenings would disqualify some applicants. However, she stresses the regulations wouldn't cap the number of licenses given out, or estimate a New York City-style curfew system. At present, there are 148 taxi drivers licensed to serve Burlington and Burlington International Airport.

Colleen Howe complained about the proposed drug tests and questioned whether randomly screening private employees was unconstitutional. Assistant

City Attorney Nikita Heller believes the city is on firm legal ground and notes that it has concerned and drivers themselves who often complain to the city about other cabs' drug habits.

"We had such a huge number of people [with associations for] possession and sale, the city would be kind of stupid as not trying to address that issue before going out a license," says Heller, assuring that drivers who demonstrate they've been clean for some time can qualify. "When you give someone a license, you give the impression the city is saying this person's OK to drive around."

Another bone of contention — the requirement of formal physicians — is a move to weed out drivers with medical conditions, from mobility issues to vision problems, that would make them unsafe for licensing, Heller says.

"We have one person with autism who could barely breathe, and we're going, 'Are you conscious?'" Heller recalls. "But that year's trying to be mean or anything, but if this person can't breathe, should we put them in a taxi with someone?" He went to make sure that whenever conditions you have is properly treated."

All those extra costs would jack up the annual taxi license fee — to around \$100 instead of the current \$100, according to Heller.

For his part, Rohrer is resigned to the city council approving the new regulations and is determined to stop serving Burlington as a result. The city, he notes, represents a mere 10 percent of his company's business.

"When the ordinance comes the next time, and people are calling for a cab, and there's a new car out there," Rohrer says, "well, thank your city leaders." ☐

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LITTLE BIT LIKE THE
WILD WEST
OUT THERE.**

EMMA MULVEY-STANAK

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Alison Henderson, M.S., R.D., c.s.c.R., "The Food Sleuth"
series: Tuesday, February 15, 7:00-9:00 pm
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PROPOSED GUN LAW IS UNEFFECTIVE

My sincere sympathies to the families of the youngsters who took their own lives [“Young Love” January 26]. It is already illegal for anyone under 18 to possess a firearm without parental consent, it's already illegal to provide someone under 18 with a firearm without parental consent. And it's already illegal for anyone to possess a firearm in a school building or on a bus. (18 U.S.C. sections 4003, 4007 and 4004, respectively).

A new law requiring that each owner lock up his or her firearms is certainly an enforceable and won't prevent any future tragedies.

Less likely provide a framework for prosecution after the event.

The most appropriate device to the resources of these programs is to improve the mental health and suicide prevention programs in our schools.

Paul Gross
JERICHO

MEDIA PROPAGATES VIOLENCE

Julius Lester's "Will My children Kill Against All?" [January 19], offers a valuable perspective on the alienation and cultural roots of American violence, with one significant distinction.

In a greatly self-serving manner, she depicts the culpability of the media in feeding, propagating or encouraging social violence. Given that we are no longer a

local, and culture, in which information is passed primarily by word of mouth, none of the night-time messages the children would have heard without some form of print or aural or digital media to disseminate them.

This makes not only the authors of sensational words liable for the real-world effects of language but perhaps even more so the media which allow those words a wide audience without, at least, a concurrent editorial rebuke.

After-the-fact sensitive postmortems offer little more than a sop to blood already on the ground.

Robert Rosenzweig
AUSTIN

FLETCHER ALLEN RESPONDS

The article "Fletcher Allen Taps the Chasm to Death by Dialysis" [January 18] was a misrepresentation of complex data, and in one instance a wrong characterization of a heart surgery outcome.

The headline implies that mortality data indicate the deaths of patients treated at Fletcher Allen dialysis units were related to inferior dialysis care, with misleadingly high mortality. The article gave the public the wrong impression, and did no service to our dialysis community and the patients they treat.

There are two issues that need to be addressed in considering dialysis care. One is the use of the appropri-

ateness may be outside of the control of the unit. For example, over the last year in question there were five deaths at Fletcher Allen's Central Vermont Dialysis Unit. Three of the deaths were patients who made the decision to stop treatment, one died from heart disease, and one from infection. The one 100 percent death rate at that unit cited in the article is not really different from the 30 percent national average when CMS analyzes the data incorporating the appropriate adjustments.

Second, when CMS compares outcomes, there is the underlying assumption that chance will be a major factor in the percentage of sick patients at a

percent of FALC's cardiac patients died of postoperative renal failure, the regional average is 1.8 percent.

This is false. The statistic refers to the percentage of patients who experienced postoperative renal failure or renal insufficiency among the most severe 300 cases in all of the end of June 2003, where the surgery was only for coronary bypass grafts. It is not a measure of mortality. It is not a measure of those who required dialysis—many died. It is not a measure of all cardiac patients but a subset of certain heart surgery patients.

Regarding comments stated in the article about staff and staff levels. The commitment by Vermont Medical

Care to hire excellent clinical staff and maintain the current staffing levels is stated in the signed letter of intent, as is the commitment to use maintaining medical direction at those units. The same commitments will be included in the completed contract.

Fletcher Allen chose Vermont, in part, because the organization is comfortable with Vermont's commitment to maintaining the quality of care Fletcher Allen provides for its patients.

Melding stories such as this inaccurately report patients and their families, and impairs health care providers without reason.

John Brunsstad, MD
BURLINGTON
Brunsstad is chief medical officer at Fletcher Allen Medical Care.

Editor's response: Last week's Seven Days acknowledged the error related to the New England cardiac bypass surgery. As in the other pieces noted by Dr. Brunsstad, Seven Days stands by its reporting. The data cited in the article have already been adjusted for comorbidity, as well as other patient characteristics, to allow one-by-one comparison.



Dialysis. The outpatient dialysis service at the Medical Center Campus dialysis unit is unusual in that this choice is skewed.

When inpatients become too sick to be treated at a satellite unit, the hospital outpatient unit, which has more resources because it also treats very sick inpatients, accepts that patient. There is no provision for analyzing outcomes at a facility that deliberately accepts inpatients whose dialysis care is challenging.

There's another problem with the article in paragraph one which states "Fletcher's choice is supported by another study last year's report by the Northern New England Cardiovascular Disease Study Group revealed 4.3

First, the percentage of dialysis caused by inadequately corrected anion was done. Here, this is because the patient characteristics at one unit may be very different from those at another unit. If one unit has higher patients at risk may have higher death rates. To compare outcomes, a correction must be made for health differences (known as risk adjustment). The risk-adjusted death rate describing dialysis facility outcomes is the measure that CMS uses to compare dialysis facilities, not the crude percentage rates that appear in the article.

One other problem with comparing outcomes at unit size. It is easier for a small dialysis unit to have either all very sick patients or all very healthy patients, making for large differences between death rates at small facilities that happen just by chance. Statistical methods also adjust for this possibility and are used to help fairly compare outcomes.

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The Flynn Salvages a *Godot* Presentation — on Screen

BY PAMELA POLSTON

Flynn Center patron who brought her kids to *Waiting for Godot* might have thought the wait was almost over. The Christopher McIlwaine production, set in post-Katrina New Orleans and performed by African American actors, was scheduled for this Saturday, February 5. Instead, the show has been canceled.

The reason? The Samuel Beckett estate suddenly pulled the rights to the play, according to Flynn artistic director **MIMI MALINA**. "We found out a week ago, and it was a startling development, because the same company got the rights a year ago to perform the play," he says. Indeed, last year's tour included stops at the Haplin Center at Dartmouth College and at Middlebury College. "Apparently the increased publicity the piece has gotten over the year drew the attention of one of the [Beckett's] family members, and he made the decision they didn't want the specifics of a theater

associated with New Orleans," Malina explains.

Which is puzzling, because what better experience awaited expectant fans than the citizens of the Crescent City waiting for help after the devastating hurricane and its codename: *Remember 9/11*? Why would the family of the Irish dramatist upbraid such a poignant and riveting update of the 1953 play? The production was associated for a 2010 *Black Nation Award* for its presentation at the Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston, and the Museum of Modern Art has acquired the archives from the site-specific production; they're on view through September 11, if you happen to be heading to New York City.

McIlwaine's original conception is exactly what Flynn goes will be able to see, and turns out. "What we're exploring with on screen is the film version of the New Orleans case," says Malina. That would be the one staged on a rooftop in the city's Lower Ninth Ward, and in a



30-foot pool of water. The piece merges Beckett's words with the rhythms of hip-hop and speech patterns of African Americans living in New Orleans. McIlwaine, a New York-based producer and director whom Malina calls "a really innovative force in theater," will be on hand to discuss the work, political activism and the duty of getting the rights to the play — and, one imagines, the ease of losing them.

Though the Flynn is rebooking

ticket holders for *Godot*, patrons may want to come around on Saturday night for the unique opportunity to witness the New Orleans play — free! — on the theater's new stage-to-riffing movie screen, and have an audience with the director. Actor 2 Kyle Mauney, who played Stragler ("Give 'em *Godot*," is coming, so will).

In addition to the Saturday night presentation, Mauney and McIlwaine are conducting a master class workshop

Local Doc Takes on Lake Pollution — and Gets Some Flack

BY MARGOT HARRISON

The *Watershed* film in St. Albans usually shows *Watershed* here but on Monday night, it hosted a lively debate inspired by a screening of the local documentary *Bloom: The Fight of Lake Champlain*.

"It was packed — about 150 people," says **WALTER GARDINO**, who wrote, produced and directed the film. He says he noticed "a few legislative reps" in the audience, along with municipal representatives and local business owners.

Perhaps most vocal, though, was the farmers. "The *Bloom*" of the documentary's title is the toxic blue-green algae, caused by phosphorus, that clogs lake beaches and kills fish. The film posits agricultural fertilizer runs as one major source of that pollution. The other two are urban stormwater and other wastewater treatment plants.

Some of the film's interviewees suggest that politicians were also addressing lake pollution because agriculture has earned cow status — as to speak — in Vermont. "Look in any politician who's running for a seat," says **BENJAMIN**, assistant principal of Billings Free Academy in St. Albans. "They will talk about

saving the farms... They are playing on the myth of dairy in Vermont." Another interviewee says traditional ag isn't contributing much to the state's economy.

Usually, farmers at the screening feel something to say about that. "I took an awful from people," says Gardino. "Farmers take it personally. They feel like they're attacking their lifestyle." But overall, he says, the debate was balanced and had a "very civil," non-accusatory feel.

Among the attendees was **DAVID**, chair of the Farmer's Watershed Alliance, whose members say it's already working to clean up its act. Kinsella appears in the film, too, presenting a farmer's perspective: "It's pretty hard to get motivated to start looking at a potential water quality issue," he says, "when you can't even feed your kids."

It's no surprise, says Gardino, that the agricultural sector of the 28-minute film has provoked the most controversy: "No one has a personal connection to stormwater or to a wastewater treatment system."

But Gardino and executive

producer **JORDAN**, a University of Vermont professor and managing director of the Gund Institute for Ecological Economics, say they didn't make *Bloom* to point a finger at farmers. It's the film as a planned four-episode series on the lake problem, with the next three focusing on solutions.

Gardino created programs for *Watershed Public Television* where he was a regional *Ready for the Series* "Restoring Science." In the course of his work, he met ecology professors Erickson and **JOY**. Together with Ben Palk of Whole Systems Design, they formed the nonprofit production company **WATER**. **BEN** is "a full-on science about sustainable solutions and have them fact-based in science," says Gardino. Then they approached the Wellbeing-based **WATER** Foundation for funding. The idea of focusing on lake



FILM

pollution came from the foundation," says Gardino. But Erickson says the topic was already "near and dear to my heart. Since my time in Vermont, it just seemed like this is an issue that's been highly politicized, and we haven't got a whole

lot of traction on it."

With a \$15,000 budget, says Erickson, the team shot *Bloom* over three months starting last September. Veteran character actor Chris Cooper, who was on *Once for the Record* Adaptation, did the voiceover narration.

The film also uses scenes from talking-head interviews and deceptively pretty shots of the natural lake. Some, taken from the sky, reveal the bright green "blooms" of algae spreading like some alien fungus.

To comply with the Clean Water Act, Vermont must set a target for the "total

in the afternoon, focusing on the Grotowski technique, named after the Polish mid-century proponent of experimental theater Jerzy Grotowski.

Molina, though disappointed the touring show won't be staged at the Flynn, is selling with the punches: The costs of flying the producers to

simply experienced due to visa problems: Cape Verdean singer Carmen Souza was booked for a January 14 show in the Flynnspace but was unable to enter the country "I had nothing to do with us," Molina explains. "The agent and manager of Souza, who bring in many international artists and have a great deal of experience with this, paid the overseas \$10,000 expediting fee to rush it. And still [the visa] did not come."

Molina acknowledges that visas have been difficult over the last decade, but says there are ongoing efforts aimed at legislation "to try to make it easier."

Let's hope it won't be like waiting for Godot.

WHAT BETTER EXPRESSES UNREQUITTED EXPECTATIONS THAN THE CITIZENS OF THE CRESCENT CITY WAITING FOR HELP?

Burlington, setting the theater and presenting the film and workshop are "the cost of doing business," he notes philosophically. "Things happen sometimes."

At least a show has been salvaged for the Godot spot, even if it's not the scheduled one and will be offered at a loss to the Flynn. Earlier last month, a show

Film version of *Waiting for Godot*, staged in New Orleans by Christopher Mulligan, plays Mondays in Burlington, Sunday February 5, 8 p.m. Free, group-sustaining. More screenings with *McNulty* and *2 by 4* Mondays at the Grand Opera House, Flynn Center 1-2 p.m. \$25. To register call 532-4548 ext. 4. flynn.org

minimum daily load" of phosphorus into the lake can sustain. In the film, **JOHN MANNING**, director of the Agency of Natural Resources' Center for Clean and Clear, notes how far we are from hitting that target.

IT'S PRETTY HARD TO GET MOTIVATED TO START LOOKING AT A POTENTIAL WATER-QUALITY ISSUE WHEN YOU CAN'T EVEN FEED YOUR KIDS.

ROGER RAINVILLE, FARMER'S WATERSHED ALLIANCE

The Environmental Protection Agency agreed. On January 24, the EPA announced that it is withdrawing its approval of Vermont's 2002 water-quality plan for Lake Champlain. "EPA intends to work closely and collaboratively with the State to develop a new plan for reductions in phosphorus from sources in Vermont," the EPA's statement reads.

What will that "new plan" entail? Goodbye, doesn't know. But, he thinks,

large-scale changes in agricultural thinking and practices would help. "We learned a long time ago that monoculture doesn't work." Urban dwellers, he says, can't let themselves off the hook for lake pollution, given the role of stormwater. "You can be part of the solution by creating a rain garden, creating a backyard garden."

Both filmmakers emphasize their interest in finding solutions — Erickson says he hopes to compile the next, more detailed, episode about agricultural runoff with a design theme. The goal, he says, is to "see if we can figure out where there is some general consensus about Vermont principles and the future of agriculture in Vermont, and where there is significant disagreement. . . We didn't have a whole bunch about the lake during the [2010] campaign, so we're hoping this film can put the lake back on the agenda." ☺

Film screens on Monday March 25, 6 p.m. at the EDIO Live Aquatics and Science Center featuring a follow-up panel discussion and on Thursday March 26, 8 p.m. at the Flynn Auditorium in Montpelier as part of the Great Mountain Film Festival. burlingtontheatre.com


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STATEofTHEarts

High School Pianist Takes the Stage With Vermont Philharmonic

BY AMY LELLY



Kevin Wang

The VERMONT PHILHARMONIC Orchestra's concert this week includes a Russian overture, a Beethoven Mass — and 15-year-old KEVIN WANG on piano in Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue*. Wang won the VPM's Jan Krasovec Memorial Student Music Scholarship Competition for his performance of the piece, the South Burlington High School junior must now prepare it, this time backed by a full orchestra.

No twice: Wang has played piano since the age of 5. He is also captain of his school's debate team, math league and Scholar Bowl, a "desperately"-type competition for high school teams.

His parents are from Xi'an, China.

Another noted product of "tiger mothering" is *Is Any One* China recent hostess on extreme Chinese parenting, *Ruthless Hymn of the Tiger Mother?* Actually, no. Far from being pushed to take up piano, Wang recalls, "I always knew I wanted to play. I haven't always wanted to practice."

The family, relaxed once adds with a laugh. He "should" practice an hour a day, he admits, but "it's not anywhere near that on the weekdays" due to his school activities.

Wang judges himself "not good enough to go to conservatory" — he's interested in pursuing finance or law — but that neuroscience proves doubtful when he sits down at his family's Kawai 6-foot grand and immerses all the opening bars of "Rhapsody." Wang's movement is almost balletic, which lends his phrasing an inimitable beauty. Both are of a piece with the moon, which is peculiarly

arranged with curved gold sculpture and rosewood chairs upholstered in shimmering Chinese fabric. A stringed instrument called a guzheng occupies another corner. Wang has played it since fourth grade, when his father, an economics professor at the University of Vermont, took the family to live in China for a year on a Fulbright Fellowship.

"He could be heading for a conservatory," affirms Wang's piano teacher, PAUL ORTEL, "but his priorities are really set. Piano for him is an obsession." Nevertheless, Ortel adds, "Kevin has a very natural and joyous, physical approach to playing."

A student and UNH affiliate artist, Ortel has taught two former Beethoven winners, including 2009 winner SHANNON ANDERSON, now a student at the New England Conservatory and a member of the Berkshire Ensemble.

Ortel, whose private students are typically advanced high schoolers, notes that 10 of his current 15 are Chinese. He thinks another Chin may be "telling about a real phenomenon," but he considers Wang to be in a class by himself. "The thing about him is that he's totally open to anything," Ortel says. "He has total enjoyment of classical music. He's just a really lovely person."

CLASSICAL MUSIC

Wang seems more excited than nervous about his first appearance with an orchestra. It's the music that interests him, not his playing. For eight months, he explains, he practiced and then performed "Rhapsody" for the competition with Ortel accompanying him on a second piano. Now he's been to two of four scheduled rehearsals with the Philharmonic. "It sounds so much better with an orchestra," Wang exclaims. "The dramatic solos — clarinet, trumpet — you gotta hear it!" ☺

F Vermont Philharmonic Orchestra, 100 Chapel Street, Burlington, at St. Michael's College. Celloist Sherry Seymour. Tickets \$20-\$40. Contact: Kate Rupp, 802-254-1111. Sunday, February 6, 7:30 p.m. www.vtphilharmonic.org

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EE

Dear Celli:

OK, so what's up with the Eiffel Tower? I mean, what is it, exactly?

Snowboardswerty!

A shallow individual might venture that it's a tower named after a guy called Eiffel (I don't mean to give short shrift to the possibility of a *Ms. Eiffel*, but female tower builders weren't numerous in 19th-century France). And, in fact, the prize mover behind the Eiffel Tower was the French structural engineer Gustave Eiffel, who also designed the interior framework for the Statue of Liberty.

Nonetheless, Snowy, I join you in believing such an answer leaves important aspects of the subject unexplored. Popular reference works are no help. For example, if we turn to Wikipedia, we learn "the tower was built as the entrance arch to the 1889 World's Fair" or, as the French in their paternal way preferred to express it, *L'Exposition universelle de 1889*. The Eiffel Tower stands at one end of the Champs de Mars, a large green space in central Paris, commonly used for such public spectacles. Cross the Seine, peninsulas respectfully towards the tower, and there you are.

But, come on. The Eiffel



Tower is 284 meters tall (including antennas mounted on top, see below), which we backward Americans think of as 1003 feet. The structure consists of 3,038 pieces of iron, painstakingly fabricated and assembled over a two-year period. It cost nearly 8 million francs, worth something like \$40 million US today in an era of trillion-dollar deficits. I suppose that's not so much. However, it's more than you'd expect to pay for a front pier.

Granted, for a world's fair you want something nice. No one is going to travel from the province of France, to say nothing of the far reaches of the

Earth, to see an entrance arch that might have been bought on sale at Menards. Still, grant it one thing, extraword is another. The reigning tallest structure in the world at the time, the Washington Monument, was a mere 169 meters (556 feet) in height, and as of 1890 the tallest conventional building—meaning one you could work or live in—was the New York World Building, at a puny 64 meters (210 feet).

A more economical people than the French, therefore, might have said: If we were to erect a tower of 200 meters rather than 300-plus, we'd accomplish our primary objective—housing any remote arch, securing our place in the record books and drawing the masses—while nonetheless leaving

ourselves a sizable sum that we might prudently invest in treasury bonds.

But they didn't. Eiffel's pitch for the project was specifically that he could build a 300-meter tower, and the expo planners bought a ticket. The Eiffel Tower regularly holds the record for rate of grandiosity to sackless of any structure in the world. (Some will say the Statue of Liberty comes close, but let's remember who dreamed that up.)

This is a matter worth pondering. People have been building tall structures since the days of Babylon—mostly for the glory of course, but usually with some ostensible higher purpose in mind. Temples and cathedrals celebrate the divine, the pyramids were tombs, the Washington Monument commemorates the first US president. The tallest building in the world at the moment, the 160-story Burj Khalifa in Dubai is the United Arab Emirates, is 828 meters tall (2717 feet). One suspects this is somewhat larger than was demanded by the local real estate market, but the fact remains that the Burj Khalifa is a building, containing habitable space.

Not so the Eiffel Tower—at least not in its present extent. It was initially intended to sit close to pure form. The fact is we're a sickle beast. The tower has an observation deck,

restaurants, a meeting space, a souvenir shop and so on, all of which change appropriately kooky rates. The tower earned back most of its construction cost during the 1889 exhibition, and in a subsidiary from the city of Paris and the project finished comfortably in the black.

However, business dropped off after the fair closed. The original plan was to demolish the tower after 20 years; it survived precisely because enthralling parties found grotesque uses for it. Bare is the victor, gazing at the tower's famous silhouette, who hasn't thought. This would be the perfect spot to park my dirigible. In reality, however, tall structures make monstrously bad airship enclosures, due to buffeting winds. The tower did serve as an airship pylon on at least one occasion, when aviation pioneer Alberto Santos-Dumont landed it during a prize-winning flight in 1901.

The salvation of the Eiffel Tower proved to be its non-aeronautics. As antennas for wireless telegraphy was added in 1906, later commercial radio and TV antennas were installed. These paid the sphere used tourism took off after World War II. Today the Eiffel Tower is said to draw more visitors than any other free-standing structure on Earth, admirably serving the role for which it was built. Which is what, you ask? Don't the dull, it's an advertisement for France. ☺

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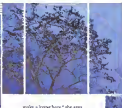
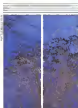
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A flock of crows between Church and St. Paul streets in Burlington



WHISKEY TANGO FOXTROT

We just had to ask...

What's with all the crows in Burlington?

BY KEVIN J. KELLEY

Twater has recently been all about a seeming uptick in Burlington's crow population. Is there actually an ornithologist lurking, as "enraptured" observers in the Queen City this winter?

Probably not, versus a wildlife warden, either.

Crows are always there, numerous in urban areas in winter, their distinctive notes. Carol Wisfield, a biologist and founder of the Vermont Wildlife Rescue Association, "knows birds don't migrate because they can

make a living here," she says.

"It's normal for crows to roost in Burlington in winter," adds Craig Newman, a wildlife rehabilitator and director of Outreach for Earth Stewardship. "You can see hundreds of them in the trees on First Night."

It's not like the crows are trucking all those "best of" ratings, but they do enjoy the amenities Burlington offers—especially food, water and shelter.

Wisfield points out that "food goes harder to find this time of year, and humans are a great source of food for adaptable, intelligent creatures like crows." We can be relied on to provide "road kill, garbage and bird feeders," she says.

Curious is a crow's favorite dish, Wisfield notes, but adds "They'll eat anything: meat, fruit, vegetable, french fries." That probably explains the many crows at Interstate Compost, whose hundreds of crows and magpies squawk hysterically while circling mounds of decomposing organic matter.

The comparative scarcity of predators is another big reason why crows prefer urban life, Newman says. There aren't nearly as many great horned owls—Crows Eat My No. 1—as the Church Street Marketplace is, in fact, the Green Mountain Audubon Center in Hanover. And it's safer for crows to stay well away from owls these days, because "owls are pretty hungry now, too," Wisfield says.

Even if a starving predator should be prowling the Interstate, crows know their safety in numbers, she continues. "If you're

out on your own, and an owl flies over you, you're hungry," Wisfield says. "You want to make your way into the middle of the flock, not be out on the edges."

Burlington is also a warmer place, literally than the "hells." It's 8 to 13 degrees warmer near the water front before the head-like freezes," Newman notes.

Despite all these conditions of comfort, crows, like other wild animals, don't really like to hang out second houses, Wisfield adds. "Birds actually get just a fraction of their sustenance from bird feeders," she notes. So, once summer comes and rural living gets more, many crows are out there.

The comparative hardness of the current winter may be forcing more crows than used to come to town, both the ornithologists suggest. They also point to the possibility of a baby boom among local crows this past spring, but neither Newman nor Wisfield reports hearing in birding chat rooms about any crow eggplants in Burlington or elsewhere in Vermont.

Those moving to rurally about swarms of crows congregating downtown and in the neighborhoods "might be birders' unacknowledged to what's a regular occurrence," Wisfield says. She recalls recent winters telling her with amazement of all the crows in their neighborhood. "They were in the

neighborhood before you were," Wisfield says she informs the newcomers.

Crows do attract attention, she adds—"They're big and they're noisy." Newman isn't becoming weary of Vermont's flocks might first sight on crows, Newman says, because "they're the most common wild species of animal that people encounter."

Maybe, too, proposes Mark Lofgren, conservation biologist and lead steward for Audubon Vermont, the phenomenon has more to do with social media than with Crows look-alikes (like American crows) itself. "What now becomes a widely circulated rumor would in the past have stopped with just a couple of people," Lofgren says.

It's true that crows creep out some humans. They're associated in legends and their poets about the crow's close cousin, "The Raven." Consider also that, while scientists speak of a "flock" of crows, folklorists refer to a crow gathering as a "murder."

Their freedom for decades has played a screen for this biology in the popular imagination, as city crows' descending call and their feathered plumage.

Whatever their rap, crows are clearly everywhere in Winooski, VT, where an Internet-for-God campaign does seem to have succeeded. The quiet city has been exploding fireworks and blowing recordings of crow distress calls in an effort to also away the estimated 10,000 of them moving in Winooski's night.

Explosions have also been reported in Syracuse, Utah and Mount Auburn, NY. The last locale has gone so far as to stage a crow-blowing contest.

Newman doesn't endorse such extreme measures, but he acknowledges that poop can be a problem. "All these crows up in the trees can play a role of 'game on' below," he observes. "It's pretty annoying."

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Mutual Aid?

By now, most readers of *Seven Days* must know that the barn at Peter's Greens in Craftsbury burned in the ground as the fog rolled off January 12, taking with it all the farm's packing and storage equipment, and a quarter-million dollars' worth of produce and meat. The barn itself was insured for only three-quarters of its value, the food not at all. At least for the moment, Peter Johnson has lost the barn.

Support from all over Vermont materialized immediately, from the pig of small-change donations on the check-out counter at Rutledge Mountain Co-op to the bid for the Barn online auction that last week raised almost \$40,000 on hundreds of contributed products and services, among them a biological agenda for East Common Creek Farm, a family installation from Mad River Valley Counseling and a lobster dinner from Rouse's Seafood. The solidarity — and the breadth of Vermont's small-business community is impressive to behold.

In a commentary on Vermont Public Radio, food writer Maritana Catta asked whether the absence of Peter's Greens would make a difference in the bigger scheme of things. "Does it really matter," she asked, "that patrons of high-end restaurants won't be dining on Johnson's beaver brand this winter? Or that members of his CSA will have to survive without deliveries of amazing beefsteak?"

She answered her question with a hearty yes, cataloging the trickle-down effects of the farm's wholesale business, its Good Eats CSA and its charitable contributions: \$100,000 of food purchased each winter from local food producers for the CSA, dozens of Vermont restaurants whose appetizers are built on serving local organic foods, 35,000 pounds of produce donated annually to the Vermont Food Bank. If winterize employees when Catta assumed would be far-fetched.

Peter's Greens is a major player in the local economy, or a certain gratified argument thereof, and that economy is bereaved until the enterprise sends up new shoots and is reborn.

I, too, extend my warmest wishes to Johnson for a quick recovery. After all, he isn't only a respected leader of Vermont's hardware agriculture movement. He's a neighbor and a member of a well-known and beloved family in these parts. His brother, Andrew, an Olympic Nordic skier, and sisters, landscaper Anners and floral designer Beulah, are just as ambitious, industrious and charming. The community mourned the too-early death of their mother, Nancy, not long ago.

It is hard to separate Peter's Greens from Peter Johnson himself. That's a good thing about local business: It has a face, someone to be held accountable — or to help in an emergency. That personal connection also makes it easier to forgive a mistake, even if it's caught first your own livelihood, and understanding to the tune of several hundred thousand dollars is one big business blunder. After all, Peter's Greens is no Co-Agro, but neither is it a struggling family farm. The food community is showing admirable goodwill.

It was in the light of these events — the burning barn, the glowing response — that I wrestled with despair as that other Peter, Vermont's new Democratic Gov. Shumlin, outlined his proposed state budget last week. The governor's principal plan for filling the \$176 million budget gap is to tap in the splatters backed off the state-funded agencies that serve the mentally ill, the elderly and women in need, let's also showing the state's commitment to local public schools.

Just like Peter Johnson's outcries, these issues have hit the rest of the economy and leave individuals burning. Severer reductions will put the most vulnerable out in the cold, and nonprofits will have to pick up the pieces. School boards will choose between laying off staff and busiering their towns with higher property taxes. Government workers will have less to spend downstream — for instance, on meals at local-venue restaurants. They've already agreed in a two-year, 1 percent wage-cut.

You might say all this pain results not to much from what Shumlin is doing

as from what he isn't doing, and which he promised not to do during his campaign, raise taxes. His holding to this despite an outflow-some amount of revenue revealed by Public Assets last week a few days before the budget address a \$200 million would fall for the state's wealthiest 5 percent, down to Washington's exemption of the Bush tax cuts. According to PAI president Paul Gillo (all disclosure: my domestic partner), "Those who are prospering the most in the current economy could close the state's entire budget gap and still pay less in state and federal income taxes than they would have if the Bush tax cuts had expired as scheduled." They'd have a few bucks left over to buy their women old purses, too.

Shumlin and his proposal is "in keeping with the long tradition of frugality and common sense that is the lifeblood of Vermonters."

Well, yes and no, Vermonters, as evidenced by the Peter's Greens story, also have a long tradition of mutual aid.

I don't know what Shumlin's own deep-seated view is, but, early in his budget reflects Vermonters' changing beliefs and feelings. The change didn't happen this year or last, it's been pushed for several decades by antigovernment rhetoric from the right.

Coupled with the flat government has been cringing are the losses faced on business. A majority of Americans now believe that the private sector creates wealth and the public sector squanders it. With this attitude in voters' heads, policymakers are loath to tax anyone, and they're especially disinclined to dismantle business or the people who benefit most from their success. This is an extremely lifeline, but when politicians have to make "the tough choices," the friendship the state is to business, the less likely it is to be to the rest of us, taxpayers and service users all.

The recently published Pulse of Vermont survey, which is taken every five years by the Vermont Business Roundtable, provides some indications of these changing values and loyalties. Respondents show declining trust in Macpolster and a waning support for public schools, they are wiser of these

their neighbors, and feel more strongly that they need to look out for themselves and their families first. Lower-income people are the least trusting. They should be

They've been screwed. The scary part is that they see the government and other less fortunate people as their screwers.

The survey uncovered some other interesting attitudes. Asked what part of life in Vermont they felt were most threatened, for the first time respondents put the safety of the food supply and family farms and local agriculture at the top of the list, educational opportunities fell way down.

Why these changes of heart, these new worries? For one, as I've said, since the last survey was taken five years ago, Vermonters have listened more to their previous governor blaming greedy teachers and state workers for the mess the state is in. Meanwhile, farmers have passed out. With more organic farms, more food consciousness and more farmers markets, people have gotten to know and like their local growers. And — so small thing — the upgraders have been doing some brilliant marketing.

The survey respondents who "had the highest confidence in many of the state's central institutions" were the "most secure financially." They were also the "most committed to life in Vermont." I have a feeling these people make up the lion's share of donors to Peter's Caves. Who but an extremely financially secure person could afford a \$200 bowl of onion soup as lion of the Wood to benefit a child?

I'm not suggesting that local agriculture is a luxury and public schools a

SADLY, SHUMLIN'S BUDGET REFLECTS VERMONTERS' CHANGING BELIEFS AND FEELINGS.

necessity. And I'm not arguing that nonprofit clinics should be supported and private enterprises left on their own when disaster strikes. But Johnson is important to

Vermont's economy and its community life. But equally important is the kindergarten teacher and the town clerk and the guy who plows the roads. Equally important are the workers who don't own companies and the non-profits that, beyond fulfilling their missions, provide good jobs.

No doubt, it feels better to give voluntarily to the backbone fellow who grows your spinach than to be compelled to pay taxes to benefit a scary runaway teen or buy a box of Xerox paper for some bureaucratic office that government provides material aid, too. And when the state cuts \$4 of services for every dollar it raises in revenue — Vermont's record in recent years, according to PML — first it's not very natural.

I've been thinking of making legal pen that say "Blame My Taxes." I write those financially secure folks to show their commitment to Vermont by joining me in putting me on. And the legislature should master the courage to take our advice.

Please, keep helping the Pete Johnsons when their barns burn down. But Vermont and the nation are burning, too, and it's time we all carried water to put the fire out. ☺

50 Politics is a monthly column by author Lawrence. Send a comment on line and/or Contact bernard@vermontreport.com

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Stoked About Stogies

A Vermont vendor puts a hand-rolled twist on classic wedding favors

BY KEN PICARD



ELISABETH HERRICK

Elisabeth Herrick says her presence at wedding receptions comes as a surprise to guests — especially when they discover she's the one hand-rolling their cigars.

"It's funny, because they're usually not expecting me," says Herrick, owner of the Vermont Cigar Factory. "They're expecting someone in a tuxedo with a mustache.... But they still expect me to know what I'm doing."

That she does. Despite her company's brick-and-mortar sounding name, Herrick is the Vermont Cigar Factory's sole *torcedora*, or cigar roller. Since 2004, she's been hiring herself out for weddings and other special events where the hosts want to add an element of panache to the *a la*. And what better symbol of the good life than a premium, hand-rolled cigar?

"It adds that extra something," Herrick explains. "There are only a few places where the媒smoke will make a cigar a business deal, so the gift is, of course, a birth announcement and at a wedding."

Herrick doesn't seem like a stereotypical cigar aficionado — the 39-year-old account manager for Burlington's

Dexter.com looks outdoorsy and eclectic — but she learned her craft from a true master. For years her parents vacationed in Key West, where her father befriended a Cuban man named Angel Garza who always rolled his own stogies.

Inspired by the process, Herrick asked Garza to teach her the skill of cigar making, as well as the history and traditions that surround it. Today, she still uses the 100-year-old cigar cutter and wooden cigar board that Garza gave her. The latter features an image of the Virgin Mary and is "like a shrine," she says, a testament to the Cuban's reverence for his craft.

Herrick explains how she typically works a wedding: First, she meets with the bride and groom in advance to find out how many cigars they're expecting, so she can estimate how many cigars they'll need. For example, for a 100-person *a la*, Herrick may recommend preparing up to 60 cigars in advance.

"You'd be surprised how many people actually want a cigar," she says, "whether they want to smoke it right there or keep it as a souvenir."

Herrick also aids the couple for their wedding colors so she can create

personalized cigar labels. These can include the newlyweds' names, the date of the *a la* and its location.

On the big day, Herrick sets up her equipment at a predetermined time and place. She might roll cigars during the cocktail hour, or at an after-dinner treat. Herrick then *res* a one- to two-hour demonstration in which she explains the cigar-rolling process, the history of cigar making, and the *event* characteristics of the tobacco she uses. She always has some prerolled cigars on hand for guests who want to *ke* re up while they watch.

Herrick uses Cuban seed, broadleaf tobacco that's grown in the Connecticut Valley and earned its Dominican Republic. She's very particular about the cuts of tobacco she uses, both for the filler and wrapper. Since most of the cigar's fill *er* comes from the wrapper, she says, sometimes she uses it if the broadleaf with Cigars as Bailey's Irish Cream.

Herrick keeps more than one variety of tobacco on hand, too, to ensure that she can please the cigar neophyte and the connoisseur alike.

"In every wedding, there's a handful of people who know exactly what they like, but they're not entirely sure why

they like it," she says. "Other people are open to whatever you're presenting. They want to know what they're tasting and how it all works."

Herrick rolls her cigars in 6" event lengths and thicknesses. In recent years, as cigars have grown in popularity — especially among women — she tends to roll smaller cigars, such as *robustos* and *toros*, which are shorter and feature a full *il* covered but mild tobacco. She rolls other types as well, including the Cuban *kos*, the Chalkita Topeda, the Poney Boy and the Clara Corrales.

For more seasoned cigar smokers, Herrick chooses a darker, shade-grown broadleaf tobacco with more dominant veins, which, she says, creates a "more rugged cigar."

Like a wine connoisseur, Herrick enjoys explaining to her guests the various flavors and textures of the tobacco they're experiencing as they smoke, pointing out which ones are "herbier" or "earthy." Also, she makes sure her guests don't commit a grievous cigar-smoker faux pas: lighting the cigar with a lighter, which can concentrate its flavor with burning. Wood matches only, she insists.

Herrick doesn't just work weddings. Over the years she's been hired for a variety of gigs all over the country, including celebrity golf tournaments, fundraisers, corporate events, even in Irish week. She's not much of a New England Patriots or a golf tournament, where she set up on the 10th hole and had cigars ready to smoke when the players rolled up in their carts.

Herrick was even hired to work the June 2006 wedding reception of Boston Red Sox owner John Henry, which was held in the clubhouse at Fenway Park.

"That was great!" says Herrick, herself a tobacco addict. "I got to run the boxes, something I wanted to do since I was 1."

For couples to-be who are interested in *a* "smag" their guests a Vermont Cigar Factory experience, Herrick recommends they contact her well in advance of the big day. "Though winter is her quiet season, she can be booked every weekend during the summer."

Herrick's price depends on how many cigars she rolls and how long she

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ways. Typically, she charges a flat "rolling fee" to cover her demonstration. Additionally, the cigars themselves range from \$6 to \$8, depending on the wrappers and type of tobacco used. As any experienced cigar smoker knows, that's a bargain for a premium, hand-rolled cigar, especially since the federal tax increased dramatically in 2009.

Vermont's stringent smoking laws generally require that stages be enclosed outdoors if employees are present. Herrick advises bar owners and other event planners to check with the venue manager beforehand to ensure there's a suitable place for guests to light up.



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ELIZABETH HERRICK,
VERMONT CIGAR FACTORY

Despite such restrictions, Herrick says that having a cigar burst a wedding offers guests another place to congregate, that and feel catered to the same with amusement how people's personalities change when they're holding a cigar. With one, the "chaos come out," she observes; women seem to gain an air of confidence.

Regardless of what smoking a, there's something about puffing on a cigar, or just holding it and watching the smoke swirl into the air, that suggests, "This is a special moment to be savored."

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dates. So I leave about other women he had been along and where they had been eating or town. I thought, Obviously you're not interested in me, so I guess I just let that person go with it. I'm not about to wait you and say that it was really inappropriate first-date conversation.

Self120: I'd say she was arrogant. But we didn't have much in common. We couldn't talk about dating or anything like that.

Opinionist's advice: I don't consider him a strong personality, and that's awkward, because I'm a very strong personality. I tend to step back and not talk about myself, and I would try to get him to open up. He's a little pessimistic about dating.

Self120: She wanted to know if I wanted to go out again when we left. It was kind of awkward saying, "I don't think we're compatible." So I didn't even say anything to her. We hugged and parted pretty much maned up. I didn't feel like I wanted to exchange numbers, because I wasn't another physical. Generally just awkward, pointed.

Opinionist's advice: I wondered if he would like me. But on he walked out and walked away from me. He's not a teacher. It could have been me, because he wasn't interested to me. He's very shy, and I know that, but I literally he turned and walked away. And I was like, "OK, later." I think it was awkward for him, like, "Oh, how do we do this?"

Self120: If I had to rate the date, I don't know. Maybe a two (out of five).

Opinionist's advice: I think I'd probably give it, like, a three, but maybe that's generous. But I've been on really bad dates before. I've been on dates where in the first 10 minutes the guy is telling me about his Wright-Whiters plan and talking about his points. And I've gotten up and left.

Update

Not surprisingly, neither date has been in contact with the other since their date.

Your guide to love and lust mistress maeve



MISTRESS MAEVE OFFERS HER TWO CENTS

Can we draw lessons from a Soviet love connection? After reading the go-to-date Internet site, Sexes Says editors decided to request a postmortem from our resident sex and relationship columnist, Mistress Maeve. Disclaimer: Maeve is not a licensed psychologist, and she had no firsthand contact with the dates. Her assessments are based on the recorded interviews.

Advice for Her

I like your open-minded and optimistic approach to online dating. That said, you may have tapped it to its max regarding and beyond later. When you make it a power of positivity — being ridiculous late for a date date is pushing it, and it can set the wrong tone for the meeting. If you're on a date with a guy who's talking nonsense about other women, he's dated her just to be servile. "By saying something like 'She's in good luck' of those other dates worked out," and instead, try to be a bit more direct about your feelings. (I've dated Lindsey Lohan drug sound.)

It is possible to be too optimistic. It sounds like you knew this guy wasn't for you, and yet you still were weird when he tells you. The dating game is a game of optimism and a little bit of realism. I hope this guy's clearly

didn't deserve to seal the date with a kiss. Sometimes it's OK to cut and run.

Advice for Him

You say you're a positive person, but that's not it. You said you weren't really positive going into the date and that you didn't have faith that you'd be matched with someone compatible. That doesn't sound good — it sounds downright depressing. I guess you're not doing it right — embrace all opportunities for human contact, especially in the deep freeze of winter.

I can totally relate to dating women 10 to 15 years younger than you — you're still young. Physical attraction and chemistry are very important, but so are maturity and kindness. In dating a woman, it's simply unrealistic for you to be 44 and still single — perhaps it's time for you to raise the age requirement.

You did most of the talking and then the conversation was "I'm good" — that should be a red flag for you. On future dates, be sure to ask all the questions you wish and ask them. No one has a bad mouth.

Being a guy after a successful first date can be awkward, but you need to men up and be able to say "I had a great time hanging out with you, but I don't think we're a match." It's the grand scheme of things, it's all about making and getting things done, and certainly a lot less intelligent than walking away without a word. ☺

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BECOMING A TEMPORARY WEDDING OFFICIANT IN VERMONT

If you're asked to officiate a friend's or family member's wedding, and you don't want to become an ordained minister, the state offers (temporarily) off-peak certificates between July 2008 and June 2010. Vermont is one of 10 states—listing a religious church of choice for a state project with budget deficits.

* One caveat: At the cost \$100 each are good for one day only. With one in hand you are able to sign a marriage in person to the town clerk who issued it and within 10 days. It's off-peak—you have married the couple.

Vermont accepts all types of civil unions, including spiritual or other religious, such as the Universal Life Church, which are typically free. What if you're not sure that's not the best year off-peak? (Single status report) The problem says that not all who administer these ceremonies are off-peak civil unions.

In other words, you don't get out of the marriage if the off-peak month long.

—J.D.

By state of Vermont's off-peak officiant.

Pronouncement Anxiety

Veteran officiants explain the ins and outs of uniting friends in marriage

BY LAUREN GIER

Five years ago, a friend asked me if I would consider being in her wedding. But she didn't want me to stand by her side as a best man in a tuxedo dress, or to perform a dramatic reading of her favorite poem. Nor did she care to have me toss flower petals or carry rings on a satin pillow.

No, what my friend wanted from me was more complicated: She was going down the aisle and smiling pretty. She wanted me to marry her. And her fiancé. Together. Forever.

I must admit that, at first I blanked. The request was thrilling. Who has more authority, more power over the least of the ceremony, than the officiant? That is the person who asks the couple if they take each other in sickness and in health, for all the days of their lives. Who unites two souls. Who is

responsible for the service's success or failure.

That's a lot of pressure for one person who is neither religious nor romantic. The more I thought about it, the less so, clanging sounded like such a great proposition.

What did I know about marriage and the ultimate commitment? I didn't know any married folks who snuck in out to the end except my grandparents, and I don't think they even liked each other. Wouldn't the more supportive as a glowing few wedding-part couple from the rows of guests, rather than standing in front of them on the day asking them, "Do you?"

In the end, my desire to be part of the wedding deflated my trepidation. I agreed to it, sure. While the ceremony was not without its hiccups, it was unique, and the couple was pleased

It was a win-win deal for all of us.

They got a meaningful ceremony with an appropriate mix of humor and poignancy, and I got to join an ever-increasing group of lay people who can say they have hitched two of their pals.

In recent years, the number of people getting ordained through formal ministers such as the Universal Life Church has exploded. Anecdotal evidence suggests weddings performed by friends and family are on the upswing. Perhaps this is because people have come to believe that marriage is less about religion and civil union than it used to be, and more about community and family.

What clerical if guests still have one to go for, at least in terms of marrying people, are the two advantages of history and experience, as well as an

acute understanding of ceremony. Parents, teachers and rabbis know how to get the job done. Most of us, unless we're theatrical types who can improvise, do not. But that doesn't mean we can't learn.

Before you take on the responsibility of being the officiant, you need to ask yourself if you can handle it, says Kathryn Blume, a non-denominational minister (her ordination came from an ad on the back of *Rolling Stone* years ago) who performs roughly 40 weddings a year. Committing to writing the ceremony will require a level of comfort with public speaking, something that Blume, an actor and theater director, certainly has. If that prospect makes you queasy, perhaps it's best to take a pass.

"Don't say yes unless you're really willing to do it," Blume cautions. "There's no reason to stress out a friendship over such a big occasion. This is not the time to challenge yourself."

Once you say yes to performing a friend's or family member's wedding, you need to figure out what the couple wants, says Blume, a now-wedded, friend with a decade of experience marrying people. He'll not suggest for the couple to skip away from traditional wedding guides.

"I write to every couple to not read anything on [The Knot.com] or on Brady

Pest or Martha Stewart," Moretti says. "They just put out this list of shoulds. You should do this, you should do that. But Martha doesn't know you."

He tells couples to close their eyes and envision what their wedding will look like — "picture a picture of the day." To mitigate the stress and anxiety, Moretti reminds the couple that only two things have to happen on their wedding day: (1) Both parties have to indicate consent to marriage, and (2) the officiant has to witness that consent. Beyond that, "it's all bells and whistles," he says.

Getting the couple to a place where they can envision the wedding day was, and not the wedding their friends and family want, is essential. From there, you can begin a discussion of the ceremony itself.

One of the most important roles of the officiant in those early planning days is to act as the couple's sounding board. When they talk about elements they'd like to see in the ceremony, Moretti suggests asking them why such components are meaningful. What does this reading or that tradition say to or about the couple?

It's not meant to be an interrogation but an opportunity to reinforce the couple's values. If your friends are thriving about adding movements such as handfasting or candle lighting, asking them to explain their motivation can help refine the ceremony.

Once you have discussed important components, you need to design the ceremony itself. There is a basic structure to every wedding ceremony, says Blume, so there's no need for precedent restoration.

Begin with a prayer, a poem or some kind of reading. Talk about why the partners are good together. Throw in a reading or a song. Then you're on to the vows, which are "a little bit trickier," Blume says.

The Internet is a boundless resource for ceremony structure ideas, as well as boilerplate vows, if the couple chooses to write and read their own. Blume stresses, they needn't memorize them.

"It's the worst idea ever. It's just asking for trouble," she says.

After the vows, the officiant can offer some final thoughts — another

poem or a blessing — and it's on to the pronouncement and the much-anticipated smooth. Then, as the officiant, you're home free and making a headline for the open bar.

It's one thing to plan a ceremony, another thing to perform it. How do you get the couple (and yourself) from quivering puddles to relaxed and happy? According to Moretti, it's all about breathing, both real and metaphorical.

In successful wedding services, he says, energy is shifted onto the couple, off them and back throughout the ceremony. When the focus is on you, you can switch it by posing occasionally and checking in with the couple through little jokes or gentle touches. The calmer you are, the more at ease they'll be.

"You want to create some space, and let them relax and reflect," Moretti says. "The hardest part of being an officiant is building space and dealing with whatever customs come up."

When the day of the wedding I'd agreed to officiate finally rolled around, the couple and I had sketched out the structure of the ceremony and written the script for the day together. I cracked some jokes, remembered to stand up straight and fashioned a perma-smile so the assembled knew it was a wedding, not a funeral. I talked about the couple's attributes and even a few of their feelings, albeit gruffly and with love.

I explained the traditions they had chosen to incorporate into the ceremony — a chuppah and some glass breaking. I prompted them to read their vows and they proudly pronounced that, by the power vested in me by the state of New York and the Universal Life Church, they were married.

Things didn't go exactly as planned. But the only people who knew that were the bride and groom, and they were too over the moon to care. It was a lot of work to make sure my friends got what they wanted. And I was emotionally draining to participate so intimately in such a momentous life event. But it was worth it.

"It's the best job in the house," Moretti says. "It's so delicious." I wholeheartedly agree. ☺

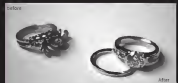
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Something Old

Giving new life to a vintage ring

BY MEGAN JAMES



I didn't suppose jeweler David Sisco that the bride-to-be who wanted her vintage engagement ring remade was nervous to commit to a jeweler. Sizing a ring isn't a big deal, jewelry isn't all the time. But for someone who has just inherited an estate piece, it can be scary to leave it in the hands of a stranger. Finding a jeweler in the finding a gem, Sisco says. "You want to find somebody you trust."

Luckily, there's an enthusiasm of riches in our area when it comes to jewelry. Downtown Burlington stone boats more than half a dozen. "We know each other, we're competitors," Sisco says. "But there's nobody on Church Street you'd get a bad job from."

On a recent afternoon, Sisco and fellow jeweler Neil Wiener are working on rings in the studio they share. The place is dusty, with fluorescent lights and a tiny radio. Both men have worked as jewelers for more than 20 years — Sisco owns Designers' Circle on Church Street — and you can tell by the graceful way they can gauge the clustered stones that they've shared a work space much of that time.

Sisco, 56, is resizing an engagement ring from the 1930s. Its platinum with delicate filigree, a half-carat center diamond and six tiny round diamonds around it. He plans to reduce the ring by two sizes while sparing its engraving from its previous owner. To do this, he'll have to cut from the side.

Sisco saws through the band, nimbly avoiding his fingers — "That will cut right to the bone," he says — then gingerly uses pliers to bring the sides together. Next, most jewelers use a torch to fuse the joint, but a few Vermont jewelers use lasers. Sisco is one of them. The \$30,000 instrument allows him to use platinum in his solder metal, avoiding the hot metal of the ring.

"It takes a tremendous amount of heat to get platinum to fuse," he says. For white gold and silver, the melting point is 1600 to 2000 degrees, for platinum, it's roughly 3500 degrees. If you don't have a laser, you have to use a solder metal that melts at a lower temperature, so as not to melt the whole ring.

Sisco puts his hands inside the machine and into the laser at the joint, setting off my firewalls. While he works, he talks about marriage.

"I'm on my second one," he says. "I can tell you that if you guys communicate with one another, you'll go a long way. Keep communicating and you won't."

**A DIAMOND,
IT TURNS OUT,
IS FOREVER, BUT
THE MOUNTING
WILL WEAR AWAY.**

DOLORES KURJAN

Of course it helps to share some interests, which Sisco and his wife, Dolores Kurjan, do. Indeed, she's the owner of Vintage Jewelers on College Street and contacted him for this job.

Kurjan, 47, can trace her love of vintage jewelry to a single, stunning ring she first saw more than a decade ago. She was working at Designers'

Circle when a woman came in with a 1920s 18-karat white-gold ring with delicate filigree and a row of European-cut diamonds. The woman's daughter had inherited it from an aunt but didn't want it; she wanted to buy a new computer.

"I fantasized about that ring," Kurjan says, but the more she'd deal in vintage jewelry at the time. So she bought it herself. "I still have the ring, but I'm sure that computer's long gone," she notes.

On a recent afternoon, Kurjan is wearing a long, Victorian necklace adorned with a cross chock-full of amethysts. It's neither, she says, it's a piece she's selling, but it speaks to her today. The shop, she says somewhat gaily, "is like a big jewelry box. I try not to [wear too much of it], because then I want to keep it."

Vintage Jewelers' showroom is a wonderland of spindles and bangles,



Rings at vintage jewelry

art-deco rings, cameo necklaces and elaborate brooches. Karjan has everything from 1950s rings to a 14-carat gold pocket watch from the 1850s. But diamond engagement rings are her biggest market. Couples buy vintage rings, have their own mended or repaired, or create a whole new design around vintage stones.

A diamond, it turns out, is forever, "but the mounting will wear away," Karjan says. So, how do you care for your vintage ring? First, take it to a jeweler who can check the setting and the tips of the prongs to make sure the gem is secure. Once everything's tight, jewelers recommend taking a check every three to six months to be checked, because stones loosen up with normal wear.

One of the easiest ways to damage an engagement ring is to wear it next to your wedding band. The rings rub against each other until the metal setting wears away and, eventually, becomes more sharp.

"I'm giddy of this as well," says Karjan. She's only been married since August, but already the setting on her platinum engagement ring is wearing down. One solution is to weld the two

rings together, which adds strength to both. But people usually aren't so crazy about that idea. Neither is Karjan.

"I figure, well, you wear it out," she says. "It's an older piece, which we replicated and remounted because it was worn out. Somebody else did what I'm doing and wore it out."

Still, for longevity, you can't beat platinum. It can usually last until the next generation without any repair. Karjan says, while white gold might need attention after 10 to 12 years.

Back at Sisco's workshop, he slips the platinum engagement ring on a metal post and bangs it with a mallet to round it out. He waxes it, buffs it, slides a dental probe through its nooks and crannies, and the ring is as good as new.

Finishing up the job, Sisco offers one more piece of advice. There's an art to moving jewelry, he says, just as there's an art to creating it. "Don't complain about what you get," he says. "If you don't like it, just judge the person so that they'll be getting into the times that you love. Because, if you say you don't like it, you're not going to get another piece of jewelry."

The man knows what he's talking about. ☺

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To Change or Not to Change?



A bride-to-be considers name dropping, and keeping

BY HEGAN JAMES

I once spent an entire math class writing "Megan Miller" over and over, as the pages of my *Topper* Keeper. Oh, Doug Miller, you were so dreamy! It was no coincidence that I was cast as your wife in our fourth-grade musical, *My Van Whistle*. Your blond hair, your math smarts, your enthusiastic participation in choruses. You were the Gilbert Blythe in my Anne Shirley. We were meant to be together.

Like so many young girls, I engaged in the ritual of fantasy name changing long before I had my first boyfriend—or dared talk to boys, for that matter. I grew out of it. I went to college and dipped my toes in woman's and gender studies just enough to start feeling I was getting shortchanged in life simply because I was a woman.

Then I started writing for newspapers and saw my name in print. What a name! I thought, wow, after work (such is the heady influence of a byline), I'm never going to stop. I felt proud of my work and my identity. I couldn't imagine being anyone else.

Until a few weeks ago, when I asked my fiancé—in that jolly way you do when you're testing emotional waters—if he'd be hurt if I didn't take his last name. His earnest response took me aback: "Yeah," he said. "I kinda would."

David didn't cling to traditional gender roles. He talks seriously about being a stay-at-home dad. He has a weakness for self-help novels. I've known him to set up a full-server station in my bathroom to cut my hair and wax my legs. I never imagined he would care what I did with his name.

So I went looking for some history. The first American woman to keep her maiden name after marriage was Lucy Stone, a Massachusetts suffragette in the 1830s. A league of Lucy Stones exists to this day, fighting to keep women from abandoning their names,

which they consider a form of sex discrimination. But, according to a study conducted several years ago at Harvard, the percentage of women keeping their maiden names after marriage dropped between 1990 and 2000, from 25 to 17 percent.

In some ways, I'd more easily give up *Megan*. My mother named me after Meggie Clary from the hit '80s miniseries "The Thorn Birds." When I was in middle school, she made me watch with her. She wept through the entire thing. I thought it was creepy. What could a girl my age possibly see in lanky old goss Richard Chamberlain?

But "Megan" is another story. I love its single syllable, its simple musicality. It connects me to my English family, to my grandmother (Oliver in London, who was famously blown off the toilet when a Nazi deathleech dropped on the house next door (she survived to enthusiastically tell the tale)). It connects me to my father. My mother thinks I should do it—change my name. "That's the whole point of getting married," she says. "It's about becoming a union, becoming family." Her parents never even gave her a middle name. Why bother, they figured. She's just going to get married anyway.

She eagerly took my father's name, all but donating her maiden name to oblivion. Until recently, when she started writing professionally again—she had written for newspapers before she married—and quickly slipped the name back into her byline.

A friend of mine has been married more than a decade but still has to mouth out the spelling of her husband's name every time she writes it. A bank clerk caught her doing it recently and asked to see extra ID. Luckily she's considered going back to her maiden name.

Many of my unmarried friends say they'll never take their partners' names. Some are PhD candidates

already publishing — one admitted she's keeping her Spanish name because it boosts her chances of getting grants — while others believe it's simply unfair for either partner to ask the other to give up a name.

The patriarchal implications of the tradition aren't lost on me. But neither are the subtle signs of marriage itself, and that didn't stop me from agreeing to marry this guy. Daniel says he'd consider adding my name to his, but frankly, I'm not sure I want to share it. We could create a brand-new name, but that strips away what I have most about me. They link us to our ancestors.

The other day, for the first time in

but when I began to consider taking his name, something strange happened. I started to feel the weight of what I've signed up for. When we get married, we won't just be throwing a party for our family and friends, we'll be agreeing to merge our lives — for the rest of our lives. That's a big fucking deal. I don't want it to feel incidental. I can't pretend that a commitment as huge won't change me.

And Daniel? He says it's just so scary changing his name with me. What if I resent him for it? He jokes that he'll be forever indebted to me. Never again can he refuse my requests for a back rub, never again override my picks on our Netflix queue.



years, I opened a notebook and wrote out a list of potential names. I don't like the rhythm of Megan Houghton. The repetition of the two-syllable names, both ending in "n," sounds clunky. But Megan James Houghton — that's not half. It's like in Oreo-cookies, with James as the one-syllable cream filling.

I was worried the idea, so I asked Daniel what it sounded to him. None of his three older sisters kept the name, he told me. "He would take ownership of it."

Daniel and I have been together for five years and lived together for the last four and a half. For all intents and purposes, we're already married. It's difficult to imagine how making it legal will change anything.

When I realized the ring he gave me — his maternal grandmother's engagement ring — it was significant to me that we keep the capturing intent TWD for Thomas Manton Durkin and FBR for Frances Brown Forbes. I loved those names as soon as I heard them, but it wasn't until I started wearing the ring that I understood why. Neither is mine, yet they arrived on my finger like a map to the past. I want to be a part of that map going forward.

But who am I kidding? It's silly to try and justify it. I am not a rational person, and this is not a rational decision. All it took was one inspiring look from the man I love, and I was sold. After all, it's just a name. ☺

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The marriage formula as most Westerners know it goes something like this: Two people meet — in class, at a party, online, whatever. If there's a spark, they go on a date. That evolves into courting and courting, and soon both are drinking the Kool-Aid of romantic love. Somewhere along the line, they most likely sleep together. They may move in together. Eventually one slips a ring on the other's finger, and our couple sets off for the happily ever after.

We almost half the time, at least in the United States, those unions end in

average cost: betrothal was accepted practice.

How such an arrangement might come about — and thrive — in the 21st century is the crux of *Five Seven Lefterns: An East-West Journey to a Spiritually Fulfilling and Sustainable Marriage*, by Vatsala and Elhad Sperling. The book is an examination of a volume first written by the couple 10 years ago.

Elhad Sperling, who looks a decade younger than his 40 years, is chief associate of the Rochester, Vt., publishing house Inner Traditions. He was recovering from a divorce 10 years ago when he realized he was no longer interested in

Religiously predated and a believer in arranged marriage, she set about arranging her own.

Vatsala began replying to ads. Most of the time she got no response, but occasionally she received "very negative and insulting replies," she writes. Vatsala learned to read the ads skillfully. "I could almost read the mind of the person... I could easily classify these advertisers as sex-crazed, money-crazy, figure-crazy, color-crazy, degree-crazy, status-crazy, culture-crazy, linguistic, slave drive, ego-driven, broke-broke," she recounts in the book.

One spring day in 1990, Elhad's ad captured her attention. "I am the owner and Chief Executive of a successful International Book Publishing Company based in Vermont [sic], USA, seeking an alliance with an Indian girl with a view to immediate marriage and parenthood." Elhad went on to describe himself as Jewish, fit and handsome, and stated that once and when were no barrier to his future bride's "stability, status, international travel, financial security and commitment." Most importantly to Vatsala, Elhad promised freedom and support in maintaining her culture and religion. "That spoke to him as an individual," says Vatsala, who found her best pen to write him a letter. She had a feeling that the ad "would take me where I belonged."

Vatsala's response was one of hundreds fielded by an acquaintance of Elhad's who, due to the publisher's distance, served as his marriage screener in India. The friend chose five women to recommend, including Vatsala.

She and Elhad traded 40 letters over the ensuing five months, probing every detail of the values they left had to sign to ensure a successful union: religion, spirituality, sex, parenthood, even their diet and desire of marriage. The marriage was probably familiar to online daters the Internet, the awkward first phone conversation, the even more charged first meeting. In this case, Vatsala's husband accompanied her, and at the end of the meeting, asked Elhad if he was ready to marry his sister.

"I will have to think on it and tell you tomorrow," Elhad told him, which surprised but amazed Vatsala. "If Elhad needed this extra 48 hours of time, he could have it," she says. "I had lots of patience."

On February 22, 1994, a little less than a year after she had begun to correspond, Elhad and Vatsala's family and friends mingled on a snowy tundra

A More Perfect Union?

A new book defends arranged marriages

BY CORIN HIRSCH



Disunited Vatsala Sperling

divorce. One partner may not really want kids after all, or resent putting career on the back burner. One likes to travel and adventure, while the other would rather nest at home. Big disagreements as values emerge with life, emerging habits to see a love affair that once seemed cozy and familiar.

There's a simple remedy to this dilemma, according to some traditionalists: arranged marriage. Those two words make most modern, Western couples cringe. But, for thousands of years and across many cultures, having one's family

what he calls the "best drive" of Western courtship and dating.

A dear friend, Inner Traditions author Ilanah Johnson, suggested Elhad marry an Indian woman. "I thought, How am I going to do that? It was a departure for me," says Elhad, who grew up in New York City. Yet, through a series of chance encounters and serendipitous events, he found himself placing an ad in the "matrimonial" section of Indian newspaper the *Mishra*.

R.R. Vatsala had been scanning these ads for five years. It was a Sunday read for families with friends of marriageable age. Vatsala — whose family called her Mukta, meaning "liberated one" — was 34 and head of clinical microbiology at a children's hospital near Madras, where she lived. Vatsala had exchanged only marriage to pursue a PhD and career. By the time she was ready to marry, her parents were elderly and her brothers were busy with families of their own.



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in Kerala for a glamorous, day-long wedding celebration. As is customary in India, the bride and groom presented themselves to each other for seven lifetimes. Their cross-cultural nuptials made Indian newspapers, along with the story of how they found each other.

A few days later, Khad brought his new wife back to his restaurant's home in Rochester, where the mood, word, terrain and small population instantly disoriented a woman used to the bustle, noise and heat of her native Thiruvananthapuram.

Khadi's enormous dog, Neopie took some getting used to, as well. The couple eventually settled into a comfortable life together and had a son, Mahir. This is where their first book, *1970's Marriage Made in America: A Love Story in Exile*, ends.

Their templates for marriage can be found among those early letters. Khadi was "Del. Love, honor and obey your husband and accord him his rightful place as head of household. DON'T Challenge, criticize or ridicule him. DO Respect your husband to put you and family before his own interests. DON'T Be demanding." These matched with Vatsala's anxiety for "no criticizing, meeting up or roles ... In other words, the man does not try wearing a skirt and the woman does not try wearing trousers."

Though many reviewed the book favorably, backlash against the couple's story and the seemingly 1950s-morality rules it promoted were common, especially from women. One reader wrote on Amazon.com: "[Khadi Sperling] has the undesired good fortune to look up with his Vatsala, and I feel really sorry for this lovely wonderful lady. I can only hope after she gets fed up with his big shot, 'alpha dog' mentality, she can make a good life for herself in the US."

A decade after their book's first printing, the Sperlings decided to reissue the volume with an update. For them, the heart of *For Strays Leftovers* is the idea of marriage based on shared values and a platform for spiritual growth. It was important for Khadi to be open with Vatsala about his dominant nature prior to marrying. "As a publisher, I am used to being abused," he says now. With salt-and-pepper hair crowning an intense hawklike face, Khadi exudes authority tempered by thoughtfulness. "I got the deal say it is not a democracy. What do I do in the relationship? I needed to know how [Vatsala] would deal with an alpha

dog. How do we navigate that dynamic? Does Vatsala want a strong man?"

He believes the book's advice sets the boundaries for the couple's rules and suggests criticism is one of the worst mental toxins. "Do you want a guy who can make tough decisions? Then they don't cheap a little bit of his point of view each day," he says during an interview. During their meeting, Vatsala reacted to this attitude with signature dry humor. In letters, she began calling Khadi "Captain."

"I thought, 'This is someone who can play the game of life,' he says.

In Vermont, Vatsala, 56, still wears a red band on her forehead and dresses in a traditional Indian sari topped with a dark blue blazer. Her gaze is unwavering, and she winks patiently to comment after her husband's energetic answers. She points out that male power is sometimes an illusion, but a necessary one. "In our culture, a man would decide when a child will marry. It's his right. But in practice, the women make all of the decisions," she explains.

"Most of the time I don't feel like I have to hold myself back," Vatsala continues. "He expresses his views about something and we come to an agreement together."

In the 15 years since they married, Vatsala has published seven children's books based on Indian mythology; she also runs a homopathy practice in Rochester. Their son is 12, and *Indian Traditions* is healthy. The marriage, like any other, is not always easy — they call the tribulations of parenthood "warms" and negotiating them requires what Khadi calls "Vatsala's tolerance. In India," he explains, "they [Indians] have a level of tolerance I've never seen [elsewhere] as such."

For dating couples considering marriage, the Sperlings have some suggestions. "Start by investigating. Start by sharing your value system," Khadi says, rather than jumping into bed or being swept up by the current of love.

Once a couple is married, the Sperlings' advice is more succinct. "Keep your mouth shut," he adds.

"Just shut up" offers Vatsala almost cheerfully. Both, it seems, are referring to themselves. ☐

For Seven Lifetimes: An Epic Love Story by Khadi and Vatsala Sperling is a sparkling, funny and accessible marriage by Vatsala and Khadi Sperling. Over 100 reviews, 163 pages. \$19.95. www.loveandmarriage.com



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A Twisted Tale

Theater review: *Oliver Twist*

BY ELIZABETH CREAN

What makes a play compelling theater — engaging the audience with a great story, or amassing them with clever slogans? Call me old-fashioned, but I'm more captivated by the well-told tale. Great storytelling is set at the heart of British playwright Neil LaBute's 2004 adaptation of Charles Dickens' *Our Mutual Friends* (1852-53) (rated some of the most memorable fiction since *Warren* first spun his firebrand parns about the Big Waddy Mammot). Get Neil LaBute: There's a reason the English novel's work has never more and to forget the novel, read it.

Victorian inspired visual, stylistic and musical elements from Barlett's dark version, a play with love music and several sung choruses. But, by making the hero a hapless victim and betraying the ending halfway through Act 3, Barlett dissipates some of the dramatic tension.

That said, Vermont Stage Company's current production of *One Twist* still entertains. It showcases mesmerizing performances by outstanding local actors — many of them making their VSC debut — in an extraordinarily focused world.

Dickens was just 26 when he created the plucky orphan protagonist of *Oliver Twist*, or, *The Parish Boy's Progress*. What we now read as a novel originally came out in monthly installments, from February 1837 to April 1839, in the London

magazine Dickens edited, *Bentley's Miscellany*. The young author was not far removed from his own painful childhood experience, labouring as a shoe polish factory while his father (squashed and crotch) prison, in 18th-century England poverty robbed children of childhood.

In society's eyes, poverty and illegitimacy also automatically stain orphan Oliver's moral character. He grows up at the gritty workhouse where his unnamed mother died in childbirth, but gets booted from that meager shelter at age 10 for accidentally requesting a second helping of gruel. His feral-home apprenticeship quickly goes wrong. The undertaker's wife, like almost everyone Oliver meets, assumes the worst. "Tears of a bad mother"

Others flee to London and help him in the slanders of Fagin, who controls a gang of pickpockets and thieves. Others vie to save or exploit the boy as he tries to survive the big city's bewildering streets. Even Fagin's criminal associate Bill Sikes and nasty streetwalker Nancy to the grateful Mr. Brownlow and his daughter, Rose. Will it

child ever overcome the circumstances of his birth?

Incidentally, playwright Rossmore makes Oliver nearly a nonentity in his own story. Like fellow founding David Copperfield, Twist remains an enigma to his Dickensian character because he becomes the unlikely hero of his own life. Bennett portrays him as a mere pawn, giving the actor herself, wearing "please don't hurt me" shoes, the full Vermont Stage production, director Jason Jacobs doesn't bolster the passive, underwritten part — played by sweet-faced Lily Eklund, 11 — with much action or emotion.

The antics in the ensemble, however, don't waste their roles with riffs. Most play multiple parts. Kevin Christopher is the most impressive character: A hollowed, hunger-stricken cynic haunted over his greed becomes the sophisticated Mrs. Seaworthy, human bones bearing as the postulates on Oliver's misdeeds. A few scenes later, Christopher morphs into a marvelous, magisterial gully of greed but once he's subdued.

Jennifer Goldstein, as Bill Sikes, and Chris Conwell, as Nancy Grey, in *Nancy Grey*, a spell-binding performance. Goldstein carries meaning, soot-like villainy with "Two smiling eyes," just as Goldstein describes. Conwell captures Nancy's selfishness, flashing anger, determination and cunning as she navigates her desperate world. *Conceal*

salient her domestic when she tries to ensure Oliver's safety, especially in scenes with Rose Knowles, elegantly portrayed by Tanya Hamilton. The motion picture more fully explores their characters' cage with a great deal of detail.

Figure is the star of Barlett's script. Rather than show the criminal's progression from evil to madness, however, Elton T. Brown's portrait starts off creepy and creepy and stays there. Brown does however brilliantly, but the repetitiveness of Figure's ramblings makes the lunacy eventually lag. As the Artful Dodger however, New York actor Bobby Tark quickens the pace with sharp, sly and always in the know.

Jeremy C. Pollack's score and costume design envelops *Dilbert's* characters in grossly rendered staid elements. Distorted words, cast-off possessions and a grimy palette of dark neutrals surround the orphans and criminals, while the wealthy inhabit a shiny, color-filled world. John B. Forbes uses stark lighting effects to reinforce these contrasts. Particularly



Libby Bellows (Driver) and
Renee Fenn (Artful Dodger)

effective in order uplighting that mimics 19th-century gas foot lamps.

Quibb's incidental music and sound effects, performed live, work wonderfully to heighten the production's impact. Victorian lord, Burlington musician David Symonds, who composed the score, plays strings, flutes, George plays piano. (Heidi also has other instruments, when quite unnoticeably, from piano to school bell.) The song numbers are somewhat less successful. Symonds' music is writing in the line, but Heidi inserts most of the choruses without clucking his playwright's "We do my characters any harm?" meter. The songs interrupt, rather than advance, the story.

How Victorians consumed Dickens' work explains, in part, his mastery of storytelling. Superficial glossing and unforgettable characters led readers eagerly awaiting the next installment. When it came out, families gathered in the parlor and listened while one person read aloud. Dickens' lively prose, vivid Victorian drawing rooms, buxom world playhouses of imagination. Today our closest communal experience to this is live theater, for which Vermeer is *Marsden* with a despoiled classical twist. It's best when they can stand with a small crowd away (E).

i Chorus, check! Directed by James Lapine, produced by the Off-Broadway Theatre Company, New York, Washington, February 2-10. (Moderation through Saturday at 7:30 pm; Tuesday and Thursday at 2 pm. 202-327-5125; offbroadway.com.)



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ROMANCE & BRIDAL

Itell myself not to expect anything like Green City Cakes. Surely there can be no comparison between the colorful, spicing-up "Ace of Cakes" work space I watch on the Food Network and the shop where I am headed in Waterbury Center. But both bakeries turn out work ending, sugar-packed confections that I can't help but feel an excited thrill as I treadle through the store to the door of Vermont Cakes Studio, which specializes in custom wedding cakes.

Once inside, I see the studio severely allows more standing room than my own narrow kitchen. Instead of white cabinets lining the walls, the place is packed with stainless-steel appliances, including the largest stand mixers and blenders I've ever seen. The unmistakable scent of sugar and butter wafts from a massive oven, evidence that owner and party chef Fern Williams has already baked bûche buns for my 30th birthday on a recent Sunday. She's agreed to let me spend the day under her wing as something of an apprentice baker. Too bad just like she didn't enforce her usual 10 a.m. wake-up call.

Ever so stringy in an acceptable tooth last summer (such is the life of a maid of honor), I've been fascinated with frosting and fondant. I've *never* had the patience for pastry but in my own kitchen projects, and fondant are so damnably handy, but I can't argue with the results: *pretty* cakes. From frosting pearls to sugar flowers, these fancy on a cake can seem like the *glamorous* older cousin to my single-layer chocolate-peach or one-kernel strawberry pound cakes. In short, it's just one *gorgeously* obvious that my baked goods really are a *gorgeous* endeavor.

Before I've even got to my apron, Williams has cut out circles of parchment paper to line the bottoms of two small cake pans, and divided vanilla-buttermilk cakes between them. The next minute, she's giving a quick chop in a hunk of buttered chocolate the size of a rolling pin, then popping the pieces in the microwave to form the basis of her chocolate sauce.

A bride and groom will arrive shortly for a toast, she tells me, pointing the



Slice of Life

Is foraging into fondant really a piece of cake?

THE CHAIRMAN FOR

now melted chocolate through a 6-ounce strainer. Though their wedding at Stone Mountain Lodge is about half a year away, they're right on schedule — unlike some couples who call wanting a cake made that day, Williams says. That's a tall order, considering she and her constant pastry chef, Kirsten Steiler, work on no more than two cakes per wedding.

It takes three days to make a fancy cake, I learn! Williams bakes on Wednesday, 6 p.m. on Thursday, from on Friday and delivers on Saturday. "Anyone who tells you they do it all, even if it's probably not telling you the truth," she says. "You obviously can't do it all in one day. As Williams mixes fruit naps and 6 p.m.

she tells me about a wedding order she once took for 100 individuals)

Trinidadian Insects	Each one took three hours to make
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WHAT IS LIKE FROSTING

"I definitely love cake," Williams says. "My test for recipes is, 'Do I want to wake up at three in the morning and...crown that? If not, it's back to the drawing board.' But at the end of the day, I want to go home and have slack. Or salad. You know, nothing with sugar on it."

We exit at the back of the kitchen through a hallway, which leads into the Center Bakery and General Store. Williams, who opened VCS in 2005 and

lives in an apartment upstairs, bought and remodeled the adjacent ground more than three years ago, adding a café for soups, salads, pastries and more. It's here that cake tastings take place — and, before Williams can even turn on the co, sept, the bride and groom arrive, with one set of parents in tow.

They're set up around a table bearing photo albums of Williams' previous work. The birds remarks on one elaborate Lake Champlain-themed cake, the larder approaches fabled like monster Champ, underwater shipwrecks and snowdrifts.

Willstone, who slipped back to the kitchen for a few minutes, emerges with the perfect little layer cake I watched her stack and frost earlier. Now it means subtly spiced, elegant piping and shaved chocolate curls.

The clients tuck into the sweets. There are 5 u, y vanilla and chocolate cake wedges, chocolate mousses, Russian buttercream, tea² cream, chocolate ganache, chocolate, on, Chambord buttercream and white chocolate buttercream. After a few bites, the bride — apparently sugar² out — goes down her fork.

"I don't eat dessert a lot," she remarks.
"I've never eaten the cake at weddings."
—*James Joyce*

But if there's a wedding, there must be cake — or so it seems. "TMs is cake-making season," Williams told me earlier. Certain kinds of loaves have become engaged over the holidays, and still others are knee-deep in planning summer picnics.

After admiring photos of the bride's gown—a stunning Spanish number with a musical bow and waist details—Williams announces, “I’m all done, artistically.” This seems to surprise the wedding party, who have only just decided to do a half-vanilla, half-chocolate cake, and are still considering whether they’d like to incorporate the real of the bride’s dream: french.

But Williams has her inspiration. She wants to translate the wedding dress details to fondant, and perhaps enhance the cake layers with fresh hydrangea blossoms. It's to the bride's request for

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food

Slice of Life by JAM

a simple yet sophisticated piece. The party ends, promising to follow up with fabric swatches.

"Sometimes people are very forthright and know exactly what they want. Other times, they're looking at you to direct them," Williams explains. I can see why she took the time on this design — more than an hour into the testing.

Turns out, many brides are looking for the same theme, anyway. "It's the 'vintage' you'd call it 'shabby chic,'" Williams says, "but here it's called 'rustic elegance'" — probably because most Vermont snows take place in barns. Clients want to incorporate natural elements into their cakes, and that's one reason Williams has become rather

Williams says. "Desert seems to be one of those things everybody thinks they can make."

It appears I'm just such a person. A few days later, I wonder through a craft store, my heart still set on making a beautiful, two-tiered, frosting-covered cake. I wonder if I'm being foolish or simply foolish by testing Williams' theory that complicated cakes should be left to the professionals... but whatever. Even though all I did was play around with some gum paste, I'm hoping I've absorbed some handy info of the trade from my day at VCS.

It feels wrong to be grocery shopping at Michael's. While I'll be making my own buttercream, I decide to hit it out for



good at creating a kitsch effect with buttercream and chocolate shavings. Along with red velvet cake, it's one of the most popular requests she's had for the upcoming year.

The rest of the afternoon, however, is devoted to cake design with a winter theme. Williams is working on a display cake for a Vermont Wedding Station photo shoot, and she's already rolled narrow strips of white gum paste into small spirals, creating snowflakes with a quilling effect. It looks stunning, but even she admits it's a tedious process.

Under Williams' instruction, I try to wrap strips of the gum paste — a stiffer form of fondant that dries hard — around a tiny dowel, but the stuff quickly becomes brittle and cracks. My clumsy attempts to smooth it back together yield mushy pale caricatures. After 10 minutes with no improvement, I give up.

"One of the worst things about what we do is that it's art, but it's edible,"

some white fondant (ironically, the stuff is \$7 for two pounds). Composed of gelatin, confectioner's sugar, cream and glycerin, it's still a mystery to me.

At home, I open the basket, only to be bewitched over by an artificially sweet smell. I instantly rubble a small pinch. The fondant is like Pillsbury frosting out of a can with the texture of Play-Doh. The very last thing I want to do is put it on my homemade cake.

In fact, I have high hopes that this is the best vanilla cake I've ever made. It's moist, delicately sweet and dense enough to stick with. And my vanilla buttercream is silky perfection for extra creaminess. I whisked flour, vanilla and milk over medium heat until they thickened, before beating them into whipped butter and sugar. I'm tempted to cut it by the spoonful, but instead I take a tip from Williams and pipe a frosting border around the edges of two layers. I fill the well inside the

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Capital Fare

The culinary landscape shifts in Montpelier — again

BY ALICE SEXTY

Burre Street is not just downtown Montpelier.

Running parallel to State Street on the river side, the residential neighborhood isn't heavily trafficked, but it is the right place for Salt. With its piles of cookbooks and relaxed vibe, the 16-seat restaurant may feel like a visit to the home of a foodie friend — who just happens to be creating five-hour brunch or homemade curries.

Suzanne Podhouser and Dan Green opened Salt in November, starting with light lunches of savory bread pudding, soups and scones. Podhouser, formerly food editor at *Green Eggs*, and her chef husband have now cut brunch in favor of dinner Tuesday through Sunday.

Talk about creating full circle: Last July, in this paper, Podhouser profiled three Montpelier chefs: Crystal Madson of Kismet, Matthew Madson, then of Black Door Bar and Bistro, and Joey Naga, then of Three Penny Taproom. They were "making cooperation to a whole new level," she wrote, as they supported each other's efforts to prosper on dining life.

Less than a year later, everything has changed — except the bold food and the cooperation.

Kidless has left Black Door, which closed its doors after New Year's Eve, and taken Naga's place at Three Penny. Naga has moved to a new venture of the taproom's owners, the Mad Sons in Wardsfield, where he whips up his signature Mexican fare for cocktail.

As for Madson, at the end of 2010, she moved 5-year-old Kismet to the airy State Street location vacated by last year's big casualty, Restaurant Phoebe. And Podhouser and Green have taken over the empty third slot in the triune State St. side right into Kismet's former spot at 110 Burre Street.

It may sound like musical chairs, but the players in the capital's changing foodscene all have something in common: creative uses of ultralocal



Results of Salt

And she proposes that the cultural shift at work in Montpelier is a microcosm of a larger movement toward more approachable, high-quality food. "We're an open kitchen. This is all part of that shift — sharing recipes with customers, explaining techniques in depth," Podhouser says.

Salt is the antithesis of a restaurant filled with "ghostly, floating servers and someone in a tall hat," as Podhouser puts it. Starting this week, she'll begin sharing her secrets in weekend cooking classes at the restaurant.

Those who just come for the food will find whimsical areas based on films, events or whatever catches Podhouser and Green's fancy. The current area, *Banana*, Vermontified takes on Altona food. Before that, it was dishes influenced by Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*. Next week, the three-week cycle will begin again with Italian small plates. Podhouser says upcoming menus will include a Shakespeare-themed fish and, raspberry sorbet and other France-inspired dishes for the Purple Owl's birthday.

The themed menus aren't just attention getters — Podhouser sees them as a fun way to work around the limitations of Vermont's winter produce, which she knows all too well as a critic. "I think it's easy to fall into a comfort rut where everything is older, bolder," she says. "We decided to let each menu have some outer exploration to force us to try new recipes and techniques and use Vermont ingredients in all kinds of different ways."

On the Altona menu, the most prominent product is pork, which hails from three different local farms. The standard dish is a plate of extra-large, perfectly aioli-drenched pork with a mix of pork liver and sausage. Napping-crown sauce brings out the slightly gamey flavor of the meat, but also subdues and sweetens it. Tender chard adds moisture, but goes down easily in the decadent dish.

The chocolate garnish, with a base of mild anise/custard made from Blackfoot Bacon Farm cabbage, includes dark, house-made pork back from Jericho



Suzanne Podhouser

ingredients in settings that see far from stodgy food design.

If the concepts and groups sound a bit inconsistent, the restaurateurs say they wouldn't have it any other way. When asked where the Black Door's customers are heading for dinner now, Madson immediately mentions Kismet. Madson says that, so local chefs, farmers and producers cooperate more and more. "When I go out, I feel like the town has gotten smaller. I feel like things are sharing."

Podhouser also sees clear advantages to local businesses slugging instead of competing. "If people consider [Montpelier] a destination for dining, it benefits everybody," she says.

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Settlers Penn, juicy braised shoulder from Maple Wind Farm, and sweetly garlic-flavored and red-pepper-fried sausage prepared by Peter Coleman, owner and intendant of Vermont Salumi at East Montpelier's Cate Farm. When not processing pork products, Coleman jobs Podhuzar as a jack-of-all-trades, working the front of the house, and making salads, coffee and meat.

Pork is showcased yet again this week in an apple tart with crumbly chunks of housemade bacon resting on a bed of white-wine-flavored, caramelized lemon. Suk is expecting its most retail-friendly minute, says Podhuzar, who plans to sell Coleman's bacon manages along with his own house-modified saus to flavors including blood orange-bay leaf, lemon and mustard poppy.

Tart does not in a subtle way, chewy, crusty bread arrives at the beginning of each meal with salted, stained Vermont Butter & Cheese Company butter and a trio of salts. Diners are encouraged to try some of each, and judge the difference between salts from Maine and the Himalays and the house-made kind.

Podhuzar makes the desserts, including an almond-packed financier with marzipan-like meringue. The sweet carbohydrates in the pure give the illusion of a honey-filled dessert with may a bee involved. More of a "salt and fat south" herself, Podhuzar says she has been surprised to find herself enjoying her de facto role as pastry chef — she and Green are also providing goodies to the Seven Theater concourse. "There's this really visceral reaction to sweet things you had as a child, perhaps," Podhuzar guesses. "I think part of the reason I've enjoyed it so much is it makes people so happy."

Down on Main Street, Bickelma has also gotten an education since he started at Three Penny Tiproom on January 14. The chef says that before joining the tiproom team, he was far from a beer aficionado. However, with the guidance of owners Matt McCarthy, Scott Kenne and Wes Hazzard, he's learning not just to pair his food with beer, but to cook with them. "The whole idea is these guys put so much effort to serving the world's finest beers, I have to make food to match them," he says.

On a first look at luncher bar week, Three Penny isn't so different from any other watering hole. A few ciders go down, someone has a beer or two, watching ESPN. Then one of those pages up, "Hi I'm drunk on Scotch and Three Penny's Regimen. I will cry."

It's Montpelier, all right, where even the burrito has a certain quirky sophistication.

Bickelma's focus is on using the moment local produce, so he changes his menu daily. The current soup of the day is actually a heavy mash of potato, potato, bolstered with pork fat, onions and Swissyone Old Brown Dog. Atop the sweet and meaty-tasting puree are ribbons of silky pasta that melt with each bite.

Amadeo McCarthy, who stands at the bar, currently pairs each dish with a house Crowing Family Danish-style cheese liver plate is sweetened with Flax Hill Farm's Puzzone de Vie apple brandy. McCarthy recommends sipping it down with North Country Brewing Company's Schrambeek Pilsner, a refreshing, bright contribution to the dishes more earthy flavors of the bar.

Cured pork joints are lightly spiced and served with pickled prunes. The

EVERYTHING HAS CHANGED — EXCEPT THE BOLD FOOD AND THE COOPERATION.

accompanying Anchor Porter, with its chocolate finish, is an ideal match for the green-and-pink plates.

Three Penny's kitchen is limited to a hot plate, toaster oven, panini press and half a sous vide. But, as he prepares dishes, Bickelma says he hasn't felt challenged by his new digs. "I've had more fun here than I have in quite some time," he admits. "I deliver the food and answer questions. I do my own dishes. It has a lot of the same personal feel of a dinner party."

Like Podhuzar, Bickelma says his cuisine is heavily based on Vermont's natural assets. He prefers to make everything from scratch rather than using out-of-state products such as aloues and almonds, previously staples at Three Penny. While busy assessing rich foods that pair well with brews, Bickelma has discovered a fair amount of Vermont food history, he says. Why back when, the ciderbees weren't beer qualified in a foodstuff in its own right. Bickelma now has plans to produce an old-time product bread made from a starter of hops.

On State Street, Modern also has baked goods on the menu. She's paired here a full-course pastry chef to make all of Kismet's bread from scratch, enabling her to rival Three Penny and Suk as a spot for house-made fare.

The from-scratch aesthetic makes sense in Kismet's new location. Still, it has a California-cool vibe, complete with chandeliers. But that doesn't stop guests from sitting on the couch with a cup of Seven Days and a moist, fatty, gluten-free cookie, or bringing small children to enjoy the organic green eggs on toast.

Even a deceptively simple veggie pizza is filled with all-local fresh ingredients, mozzarella tomatoes, sweet corn, and olive oil and house-made olive oil. The bread is delightfully soft and chewy with a crisp exterior.

Newly added pizza is more traditional, and Madeline believes a chronic cheese has come with it. "I feel like a lot more twenty-somethings and young families have come back and rented their parents on in [Burlington] — that 30-and-up Black Door crowd," she says.

To match her more upscale clientele, Kismet is now offering a dinner menu that includes short ribs braised in Argentinian Malbec with baby winter veggie — even mini-Jerusalem artichokes. If diners are shocked by rich meat dishes at a restaurant so strongly associated with vegetarian fare, they needn't fear. Everything on the menu can be prepared gluten free or vegan.

Kismet also has a newly bustling bar scene with local options, as well as organic and gluten-free sips. There are plenty of alcohol-free cocktails, including creative martinis.

It's all in the spirit of inclusion and openness that seems to set up the current capital dining scene. Podhuzar credits the city's residents with making his food to thrive. "This is a town where a lot of people know where food comes from, how it's prepared. That's... allowing some really neat things to happen," she says.

There was a time when adventurous Vermont diners had to head to Burlington. But now, perhaps Bickelma speaks for Montpelierians when he says, "I have no interest in going anywhere else." ☐

6 Suk, 175 State St., Montpelier, 855-9958, 855-9958, 855-9958

Green, 12 State St., Montpelier, 855-9958, 855-9958, 855-9958

Three Penny Tiproom, 125 Main St., Montpelier, 272-8777, 855-9958, 855-9958

2.5 | MUSIC

Some Kind of Wonderful

Talk about transparency: While many musicians remain tight-lipped about the real-life circumstances behind their tomes, San Francisco-based David Berkeley could write a book about them. Actually, he did: *Thirteen* (except on the cover to be released) 200 Quarts and a Guitar captures Berkeley's inspiration for each song on his new album, *Some Kind of Care*. But you don't have to study up on the short stories to make sense of his concert at Montford's River Arts Center this Sunday, word has it the crowd-pleaser is equally forthcoming in person, setting up each side with a side order of tales. With themes of fatherhood, love and longing, these are "songs to connect by," writes Rolling Stone.

DAVID BERKELEY
Saturday, February 5, 8-9 p.m.
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in Montford, VT
\$10-15 (suggested)

2.4 & 5 | FAIRS & FESTIVALS

A Wintry Mix

If ever there's a winter weekend to spend in the Queen City this is it. Brave the cold — hey it's no -20° — for the 19th annual Burlington Winter Festival. It starts with the 2011 Vermont Snow Sculpting Competition, where frosty works of art spring to life. Last year's throwdown featured everything from a mini-replica of the Eiffel Tower to a party of penguins. Folks check 'em out and vote for their favorite at Saturdays Church Street Ice Walk. Meanwhile, sledging, snowshoeing, dog-sled rides and ice skating await at the waterfront — as do peripheral events such as the Penguin Plunge, the Burlington Parks & Recreation Family Activity Expo at ECHO and the Kids VT Camp & School Fair at the Hilton. Top it off with the Young Traditions Showcase and Family Centre & International Dance at Burlington City Hall Auditorium.

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burlingtonwinterfestival.org
info@burlington.com

Don't miss last year's Church Street Ice Walk



2.7 | WORDS

Neverending Story

Words regularly spring to life on stage, but this week's "The Art of the Storyteller" delves into the story-gravy of narrators like never before. Playmaker, actor, playwright and Northern Stage producing director — otherwise Dahearty was down with headlining author and Hanover, N.H., resident Juli Perouté (pretend) for a conversation about structure, style, design, the publishing world and, really, whatever she comes up. Perhaps Perouté's nod to Hollywood's star-studded reading for *My Sister's Keeper*, or why she chose to write for the "Wonder Women" comic-book series. It's "incredibly exciting" and "very fun" event that her second book tour," says Dahearty, noting that Perouté "has a lot to see [Northern Stage] shows as a regular book." When on

THE ART OF THE STORYTELLER

Monday, February 7, 7-8 p.m.
at Briggs Opera House in
White River Junction \$10-35
Proceeds benefit Northern
Stage info: 254-7000
northernstage.org



calendar

February 2-9, 2011

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Broomsticks

Work 21 Yearbook Report: Don't Forget to Applaud a Performer If March's report isn't your fave! Applaud the monthly awards for the students who were the most creative in their fields. **Presented by** Highland Lodge 8 BC Chapter. **December 8-9: 30 a.m.-8:15 p.m.** Includes networking lunch. Info: 553-2677, mclhghlandlodge.com

What's a Graduate? **Don't Let Your Work** is a series of six 30-min. live-action educational programs about marketing strategies and computer programming. **Presented by** Laramie High School. **February 2: 11 a.m.-3 p.m.** Info: 470-1840 ext. 2

Education

Give Back: 21st Annual Big Give **Don't Let Your Work** is a series of six 30-min. live-action educational programs about financial aid and career trends. **Presented by** Laramie High School. **February 2: 11 a.m.-3 p.m.** Info: 470-1840 ext. 2

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Call of the Wild

The cry of a bird, the whistle of a gusty wind... **The Call of the Wild** To make a traditional concert sound more like a walk through nature, the four-piece band is presenting the second set of songs, or "forest songs," where woodwinds produce two to three notes at a time. The group pairs the resulting notes and dances with new instruments like the didgeridoo and gong—as well as more

finger keyboards, drums and guitars—for sparse, sensitive songs. It boils down to "forest songs" inspired by electronic music, as the *Washington Post* puts it. **TIME** Magazine says it "has a feel where a cosmic mood" better

hope that mood strikes next Wednesday evening, when **The Call of the Wild** To perform as part of Chandler Music Hall's daytime performance series.

How to Hear It 8 p.m. Wednesday, February 2, 8 p.m. at Chandler Music Hall in Chandler, 28 Info: 553-5455, chandlerarts.org

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Burlington City arts

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SEVENDAYSVT.COM/CLASSES

procedural differences present in the two studies.

Thamnotus dentatus offers a

music

Since meeting at a small gathering for black old-time musicians in 2005, the Carolina Chocolate Drops have become one of the most successful young string bands in the country. The North Carolina-based trio, anointed by legendary fiddler Joe Thompson, drew on a rich yet largely underrepresented component of American old-time music: black string bands. Infusing an appreciation for traditional with modern sensibilities and twined guitars, the Carolina Chocolate Drops represent something deeper than mere revivals. They represent a musical evolution.

Seven Drops caught up with *Chocolate Drops* bandleader Dom Flemons by phone in advance of the band's upcoming gig at the Barn Opera House on Saturday, February 5.

SEVEN DAYS: Was it surprising for you to learn that there was such a rich history of black string-band music? DOM FLEMONS: Oh, absolutely. We all had some sort of notion about it when we came to the Barn Music Gathering in 2005. But, for the most part, it was just kind of a gradual thing that we all learned about. We didn't really know about any of this music when, just like anybody else. And even so we've played, we're still learning more about it, too.

SD: Given that traditional music has been steadily growing in popularity, why is it only recently that people are developing an interest in black old-time?

DF: The string-band music and country music that's been popular, that's the easy one: to get it's like, if you get into Weck, the Beatles are the fiddling you're going to come up with. But then you can get into other bands like the Lombas or the Hells. But that's not going to be what happens if not.

SD: If you were to listen to black string-band music in a vacuum, what would be the stylistic and thematic differences from what most people associate with old-time?

DF: It matters who you're talking about. It's very much a Southern thing, but also was a function of where the music was [developed] in the Southern culture. And that's true with both black and white string-band music.

SD: So it's geographically specific? DF: There's more rural stuff and there's more urban stuff. Like, the Grand Old Opry is an urbanized version of

hillbilly music. So, what happened was that people were coming from the outer reaches of Nashville, from the country, into Nashville to play the music. Then, that was broadcast outside of Nashville. And even those guys, they knew a lot of black string bands growing up in the country parts of outside Tennessee.

But the black string bands were very different because they evolved into blues bands and jug bands... as you find examples of those, too. Like, Jim and Andrew Yocom, for example. They have a very urban sound, and they were from a part of Georgia where there was a more urban and closer sound. Then there are folks who were recorded in the field, and so on a commercial record.

SD: And what were the stylistic differences there?

DF: The more rural sound is often a more syncopated sound. The bands tend to have a different feel. It's almost like funk bass, where it's really, really wild and syncopated, while the fiddle is holding down the tune. Other times the black string-band sound is just like white string bands, which is one of the reasons it never really caught on—it wasn't different enough. The public at the time wanted to hear the blacker music done by black people, not the white-derived music from black people.

The same thing happened with religious music. People drifted away from the white-derived black spirituals, and gospel became the thing after that because it was a blacker form of expression.

SD: So, it's sort of like the difference between Motown and Max: where one was a more polished, groove-oriented and the other a grittier, more natural type of soul music.

DF: That's right. And you can see the differences there, culturally. In Detroit and Memphis, you have two different sets of people and two different audiences and different music communities happening. Soul music is actually a very good comparison with how black string bands worked.

SD: Traditional music seems to be experiencing something of a patch movement, both in terms of drawing younger fans, and younger bands starting to explore the genre and take it in new directions. Why is it resonating with youth culture more now?

DF: I think the interest has always been there, but I think it's different enough from the popular music that people are hearing that they're drawn to it and want to try it out. I mean, it's not rocket science to play old-time music. It's very simple. Some people go out with a punk aesthetic, where it's simple and you can just run away on it and play as loud as you can, which is good enough in itself. But there are more outliers now, too, especially female. And there are movies like *O Brother, Where Art Thou?*, *Ghost World* and a movie that inspired us, *Love & Lies*. Even though like Johnny Cash's *American Recordings*, Tom Waits being all that music on *Black Kites*—these sort of things have permeated

and started changing the perception of the genre to make it something new.

SD: So it's evolution.

DF: Right. The Carolina Chocolate Drops, we're going to end up like the first rock-and-roll singers, where we're kind of older to these younger kids wanting to play old-time music, too. Like, you see Chas & Jerry and Bill Haley... they're not young people. These people were doing other types of music and hit a middle age when they were playing for younger people. Then the younger people take it somewhere else—Ruddy Wally, or anybody on San Records.

SD: You mentioned a "punk aesthetic." Do you see parallels between folk music and genres like punk and hip-hop?

DF: Absolutely. And you mentioned hip-hop... people haven't delved into that aspect too much, yet, which I'm really willing on. I can't wait to see somebody else do it. The idea is my head is to have a country-blues album and have hip-hop artists do it, but do a pretty straight. Go to Green's new song, "F*** You!", that could work. Or even "Tightrope" by Justin Moore, you could make that into a string-band number. There are parallels all over the place. ☐



Black and Blues

Checking in with the Carolina Chocolate Drops' Dom Flemons

BY DAN ROLLES

SOUND*bites*

NEW DANCE COLLECTION

The Big Squeeze

If there is anyone in the state who could really use a leg right about now,

It's probably **PETE JOHNSON** of Pet's Greens farm in Conshohocken on Wednesday, January 12. Johnson's winter food storage and processing facilities were destroyed in a fire. Fortunately, no one was hurt in the blaze. Unfortunately, Johnson's losses are devastating, and threaten the future of one of Vermont's beloved veggie producers.

One of the comforting things about being in a close-knit community, such as we have in these here Green Mountains, is that when one person is in dire straits, others tend to respond quickly. (Another comforting thing is the phrase "beloved organic producers" and actually mean it.)

Vermonters have a long history of using music to help neighbors in need. When Burlington Eds ~~a son~~ and ~~was never~~ lost their apartments in a fire in 2008, the community responded with a series of benefit shows and helped the Strabomans get back on their feet. When lovely business ~~sons was~~ ~~sons~~ was nearly killed after being struck by a car riding his bike home from library

Ground that same summer, there you were again, rocking out while opening your hearts and wallets to lend him a hand. Some for **DAVE, HARBONAN** following his near-fatal car accident, also in the summer of 2003.

Wow, that's really useful.
Moving on...

The cost of getting Pete's Greens back in business will likely be staggering. But here you are again. And you're bringing more phishals.

Thursday, February 3, Love Tomorrow Today, Select Design, Healthy Living and Gardener's Supply will join forces to present quite possibly the biggest benefit show we've seen in years, "Bring Your Farmer, A Night of Music to Benefit Pete's Greens" at the Higher Ground Ballroom. What warrants the hype? Well, I'm afraid you asked.

The show, which sold out shortly before this issue went to press, will feature a slew of local musical talent leading their acts — and drums and horns, and keyboards, etc. — to the cause for a national jam session. As of this writing, the lineup includes **BREX LAWREN** and **RAY MCKENNON** of the **THE AMERICAN BAND**; **MC NAGNIE**, **CURT BERMAN** and **PETER DAY** from the **CRAY**; **WICK PRICE** from the **SWIFT BIRNIE**; **JEROME PARRA**, **MIKE CLIFTON**

and MATT KIRSH from LONDON
JES COONE, SUVE SHIPPO, ISLAM
MOLANTRY and BAREFOOT
TRUTH'S WILL EVANGELIST
Oh, yeah, and some guys
called PAUL and JOE.

Here of back to Johnson and all the folks at Pats's Greens. And thanks, once again, to all the fans, artists and organizations that have chipped in and reminded me just why the hell we live here. Especially this time of year, we could all use a little heartwarming, right?

BiteTorrent

Aprons of nothing: It might be way too early/borderline cruel for most of us to start thinking about the Burlington Discover Jazz Festival. But to VIBRATE PLACATE keyboardist and all-around swell guy **PARKER SMITH** was rocking with his new Moenish band

new-school outfit **ANNO DOMINI** at Nectar's this past Friday. I couldn't prevent my own thoughts from kindly drifting toward those lucky nights in June when all of Huntington is a stage. This is hardly going out on a limb since (1) **BDJF** has the **ANNO DOMINI** as its second in stardom; that night, and (2) the band is signed to **BDJF** Suck's very own **LOLLA GOSWAMI**'s New York label, but I'm venturing a guess that these cats might end up with a gig or three during our annual lucky fortnight. And that would be a very good thing indeed — especially if they're playing outside. Think about it.

In the more immediate future, this Sunday, **AUSTIN UNIVISOR** unveils the first in his unending series of water-tomb Raider clones as



...and the ...

[illegible]

There Can Be No Doubts



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REVIEW *this*



Pariah Beat, *Bury Me Not*

(SELF RELEASED CD)

In music criticism, we take a great deal about influencers. In most cases, it's an attempt to describe music in universally reliable terms. For example, if I tell you so and so clearly listens to a lot of Bob Dylan, you immediately understand some basic characteristics of said artist's music without ever hearing it. It's an imperfect shorthand, but for our purposes it works, mostly. But what if (we could) hold down the various and disparate pieces that make up a band and divine some elemental appreciation of its building blocks? Better yet, what if a band consciously did it for us?

Saddled with the nebulous "Americana" tag, Thehardt's Pariah Beat have long traded in genre-jumping mishmash of newly won't. Their debut full-length, *Pariah Beat Awake*, was a riotous and, at times, schizophrenic exploration of roots, country rockabilly and any number of other trashy "oldies" on. However, their sophomore full-length, *Bury Me Not*, reveals a more purposeful approach. In discussions prominently involving copious amounts of whiskey and vinyl records, songwriters Nick Cheryll, Billy Sharf and Emily Eastridge distilled the scope of their influences down to three albums: *Car Wash* on a *Grand Road* by Lucinda Williams; *Glenn, Headless, Etc.* by Dwight Yoakam; and *Gunter Town* by Steve Earle.

From the first notes of the raucous opening-riff track to the record's solemn denouement, "Family Pie," Pariah Beat have crafted a record that bows in reverence to our out-of-house-cid trinity. But the band

transcends mere hero worship, applying members' collective and individual strengths to illustrate what makes Pariah Beat unique.

Sharf's "I Don't Want to Go to Heaven" is a bawdy, slower romp Williams would likely be proud to have written. Cheryll's cheeky, bohemian-tongued "Elvis in Jerusalem" while stylistically divergent, reflects Earle's pointed wit. And Eastridge's playful "Miss Ella Strickland" as a happy guess at that, at moments, is evocative of each of the band's core influences while sonically removed from all of them.

Other cuts, such as "1000 Songs" and the cowboy-dreamer "Romy Road," draw a punk-dreamer lineage, particularly to Earle. Still, while this band seems at its influence on its finest shows, *Bury Me Not* remains a unique and unpredictable record.

The flow in citing an artist's influences to describe his or her work is that it fails to completely address the merits of the artist in question. Dylan may indeed have inspired our aforementioned band. But that doesn't mean that, just because you love Highway 61 Revisited, you'll dig our fictional pal. (An ironic truth: Dylan has influenced a far greater number of bad songwriters than good ones.) Regardless of our chosen discipline, we are all products of our influences. What matters is how we wield those influences as a reflection of ourselves. With *Bury Me Not*, Pariah Beat have expertly done just that.

Bury Me Not is available at Pariahbeat.com.

DAVID BOLLER

Wards, Reagan Dead *Wards Alive*

(SELF RELEASED CD)

"We are the Wards, we play punk." Such is the inverting opening salvo from Wards front man Sean Carley, introducing the latest album from the original Lexington punk band, Reagan Dead Wards Alive. Like the record itself, it is a straightforward declaration of peppy contrivances such as sadness or irony. And, like each of the band's sporadic releases since 1977, it is aggressively, defiantly lo-fi. The Wards have activated the Gipper, but it appears they still have some work left to do.

Cherking in at exactly one hour, over 24 tracks, *Wards* is a blustering "fuck you" to... well, the same shit that riled up the band three decades ago. Ronald

Reagan may be dead but, according to Carley and co., his evil legacy lives on. The lita that played us this — war, poverty, social apoplexy, yuppie — still do to now. Sadly bands like the Wards will never run out of things to scream about. But, oh, how they scream.

"I grew old, but I ain't that done yet," declares Carley at the start of "Shut Down," just as the band explodes in a man-brother of sobbing punk fury. The song is representative of the Wards' ethos as a whole. Gunshots Franco and Chris Alley unshackled frayed lines with ragged enthusiasm over rudimentary bass and Rick Lussich's frantic drums. Meanwhile, Carley scathes rabidly with an unbridled intensity double that of most punk half-lit his age. It's a sloppy, bawling mess — in other words, exactly what punk is supposed to be. Take notes, whippersnappers.

Wards features a re-recording of the Wards' signature anthem "Weapon Factory," originally released in 1983. Though the Walter General Electric



DAVID BOLLER

plant is no longer in Lexington, time has hardly softened the song's bruising impact. When Carley envisions factory workers forking coffee breaks in the midst of building weapons that "destroy the future," it's as poignant — that's right, poignant — now as ever.

In an age when punk rock has been reduced to the antiquarian wallows of adolescent wannabes declared in *Kanye West* to *Travis* from *Urban Outfitters*, the same fact that a band like the Wards exists at all is remarkable. That they would still be compelling and relevant 30-plus years after forming at the Queen City is a testament to the enduring potency of the genre. Or, perhaps, a sad suggestion that we never got to learned the lessons punk rock was supposed to teach us. At least we still have the Wards.

DAVID BOLLER

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Saturday, Feb. 12 • 8:00 pm

The Tupelo Experience

The big news this year is the arrival of Tupelo Music Hall to White River Junction — this music hall has single-handedly changed the dynamic of the local music scene in the Upper Valley.

— Dave Cook
Yellow River Music

JESSE COOK
Friday, Feb. 25
8:00 pm

JAMES HUNTER
Sunday, Feb. 27
7:00 pm

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Stepping Right Up

"Under the Big Top," "George Rouault: Cirque de L'Etoile Filante" and "Masked Spectacle"

A trio of concurrent exhibits at the Fleming Museum illustrates how visual artists have responded to classic traveling performers. "Under the Big Top, The Fine Art of the Circus in America," "Georges Rouault: Cirque de L'Etoile Filante" and "Masked Spectacle: Commedia de l'Arte and Street & Puppet Theater" create a colorful panoply of images relating to themes found in pageants and circuses.

"Masked Spectacle" leads off the show in the museum's Wilbur Rooms. Detailed portraits by American/Vietnam war artist Giuseppe Penone (1942-1989) focus on masked characters that have appeared in street-grade European theater and seem to be all united by Baroque richness. Penone's "Commedia de l'Arte IV: A, Il Dottore" is a lovely portrait of a masked performer in character dramatically exiting a scene. The exhibit also includes 16 paper-mâché masks from Vermont's once-famous Puppet Theater, among them horned devils, large satyrs and human-sized "White Clowns" masks.

In the East Gallery, Rouault's 1938 suite of 16 engravings with aquatic focuses on a darker aspect of clowns, in this case rendered in the French artist's signature heavy black lines and rich colors. "Madame Lisonier" captures a female clown in a tux, with a mask-like face, looking directly at the viewer. "Enfants d'Or" is a sad, muscular male figure with a haggard countenance. Rouault's simple dots of color and dark outlines give his prints an appearance of stained glass. These are welcome holy, sublimated portrayals. Rouault was more interested in the sad life of clowns than in their snail-rickety jockey performances.

The most diverse exhibit of the show is "Under the Big Top," which includes early 20th-century painting, prints and drawings, and even a few 19th-century Vermont newspapers advertising the circus. The exhibit's aim is to explore the artists' psychological connection to various circus performers. After all, notes the Fleming's conservator, artists, too, "find by their skill and talent at the edges of society." Burlington artist Lance Richardson's "Clown" drawing from 1947 empha-



THE EXHIBIT'S AIM IS TO EXPLORE THE ARTISTS' PSYCHOLOGICAL CONNECTION TO VARIOUS CIRCUS PERFORMERS.

size the grotesque and frightening, the face in light is a skull with a pointed hat, while a face crowded against it at left is smeared with makeup and has dull, heavy eyes.

George Bellows' 1912 painting "The Circus" conveys the skill of a female barrelvailler standing on a foot-tapping wheel stealer, while a troupe of acrobats darts as gravity overtook. Best known for his paintings of boxing matches, the American Ashcan School painter masterfully captures the energy of an audience engrossed in a dramatic

event. Bellows' theatrical light and symmetrical composition are sturdy and alive with movement.

"Giras Test," by 20th-century print artist and illustrator George Lukis — also a member of the Ashcan group — is informed by his interest in working-class subjects and street scenes. It depicts the outside of a big-top tent in the evening as a crowd streams into the show. Lukis' style is simple, almost primitive, but his figures seem to flit with anticipation as they stride from darkness into the bright world of the spectacle within.

Below moving pictures come along, circus and vaudeville dominated popular culture — and traces of their tell-all are all around us. In November 2010, large-scale posters from the 1980 "Born Tough and the Wild West" circus were discovered on the side of a building being demolished in Barre. Unfortunately, they were destroyed. A hap-



Left: Stepping the Barre, by George Rouault
Right: Flying Circus by John Deane, 1911
By John Deane, 1911

pie fate met it in 1981 posters hidden by clings on a Colchester house in 1991. They were salvaged and donated to the Shelburne Museum, which owns a large collection of circus art and artifacts. The Shelburne mounted "Circus Day in America," a large, history-oriented exhibition last year, which included the conserved Colchester posters.

The Fleming's current exhibit demonstrates the ongoing interest in the circus, and the depicted circus artists have found in its iconography and human elements. Big-top art may be flitting, but the artistry and drama they engender are timeless.

MARC WOJOY

F "Under the Big Top," "George Rouault: Cirque de L'Etoile Filante" and "Masked Spectacle" Fleming Museum, Burlington, Vermont, January-February 3, 2012. Hours: 10 a.m.-5 p.m., Friday-Monday.

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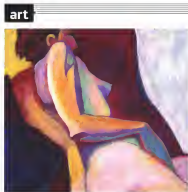
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CENTRAL VERMONT ART SHOWS IN 2012

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hence open to the Vermont photographer. Through
February 25 at Cambridge Gallery & Fine Arts
Studio in Montpelier. Info: 225-4676

showplace gallery

DAVE VERMETT Centering Communities, Sense
and Photography. Images of recent performances
by Dance Company of Montpelier and the 10 artist
and a show community of New Orleans. Through
February 30 at Montpelier Center for the Arts,
Montpelier. Info: 442-9433

DAVE VERMETT I have not seen you yet
and you are gone by the Vermont artist.
Through February 25 at Gallery 100 in Richmond.
Info: 434-8434

KATE MUELLER Color and Curve, pastel and oil
portraits of people with images from the artist's
Through February 25 at Cambridge Gallery & Fine Arts
Studio in Montpelier. Info: 225-4676

SCOTT BARNETT FINE More Than Snow, winter
photographs. By the Vermont artist. Through
February 25 at Gallery 100 in Richmond. Info:
434-8434

South Trees

ALEX BOTTIGLIONE Mixed media and materials
paintings with a landscape view of the world.
Through February 25 at Fine Arts in Montpelier. Info:
586-8276

BETH KETTER "Visual Stories 2011" paintings of
mountain scenes inspired by natural surroundings.
Through February 25 at Vermont Gallery & Fine
Arts Center in Stowe. Info: 226-6206

CHRISTOPHER DICK Paintings of North and
South, portraits and landscapes inspired by the
American West. Through February 25 at Fine Arts
in Montpelier. Info: 586-8276

ELIZABETH FERRIS Abstract paintings by the
Vermont artist. Through February 25 at Fine Arts
in Montpelier. Info: 586-8276

JAMES LUCIANO Selections from "Light and
Shadow" series. By the photographer and
artist. Through February 25 at Fine Arts in
Montpelier. Info: 586-8276

CENTRAL TO YOUR NEW LIFE



*"It has been pretty fantastic. The staff was so
wonderful. I would not change a thing!"*

And who would want to? Angela Selvaggio and
Chris Welch have a beautiful son. Their 6th/10th
first born - William Pasquale Selvaggio Welch
- arrived on Sunday, January 23. We visited on
Monday and his parents were nearly bursting
with joy - marveling at his every perfect feature.
Will was sleeping peacefully, completely unfazed
by all the commotion and the fact that Mom
and Dad wanted to play. We bet that will
change once they are settled in at home in
Rayston. Best wishes Will - and Mom and Dad!
We're betting there's lots of fun in store for all.



Gail Tannenbaum,
MD, OB-GYN



Kristin Hammond,
EM, OB Nurse



Christine
McFarlane, RN,
Lactation
Consultant



Karen
Zhou, MD,
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Kate Mueller is the
artist's second portrait of a colored woman
on a horse and you'll find the remarkable
curves of a Vermont landscape. Her legs
and hooves, as well as the chair's gentle
slope, become mountain ranges on the
horizon. It's no coincidence Mueller,
who has focused solely on the pastel mode
since the mid-'90s, recently began playing
with shapes from the outside world,
incorporating them into her portraits. In
her show "Color and Curve" in Castleton
State College's Christine Price Gallery,
the horses body becomes an extension
of the rolling hills, with all the surprising
colors of a sunset. Through February 28.
Pictured: "Black Story" (detail)

LARRY GOLDBERG "Water in the Kingdom"
Landscapes and Landscapes "Water in the Kingdom"
begins of buildings, it's a series of mountains, rivers
and fields. By the artist. In the Kingdom
Gallery. Through March 2 at Vermont Fine Arts
Gallery in St. Johnsbury. Info: 744-0124

MARC ANDREY Paintings by the Vermont artist.
In the Kingdom Gallery. Through August 10 at Kingdom
Gallery in St. Johnsbury. Info: 744-0124

MARY WELSH "If Such a Thing Should Happen"
Abstract and representational paintings by the
Vermont artist. Through April 1 at Vermont Fine Arts
Gallery in St. Johnsbury. Info: 744-0124

MICHAEL WELSH "If Such a Thing Should Happen"
Abstract and representational paintings by the
Vermont artist. Through April 1 at Vermont Fine Arts
Gallery in St. Johnsbury. Info: 744-0124

ART SHOWS

STEPHEN HARRICK, "Words of Wisdom From Martin Luther King Jr. and Amos 10:12-13 by Stephen Harrick" an exhibit is presented by Queens Museum in honor of the 40th of his leader and his late husband. 2015 of editors (unpublished) worked a long time, feeling, seen and listened to the world. Through February 28 at Stephen Harrick Gallery and Cag Chapel in St. John's University, 1976, 800-400-0000.

THE ARMY MARCH GROUP & ARMY ANGLES work by members of the local arts organization, including Louise/Alan Pearson, Ann Votaw, Phyllis M. Goss, Maude Sulham, Jane Reynolds Ann Truitt, Maria Shuler and more, in Gallery 1, abstract paintings and Japanese woodblock prints by New York City artist Angie in Gallery 8. Through March 4 at Silver Arts Center in Marietta, Ind. 46531.862

HALL ROBINSON & JAMES PENCE JOHNSON
Entrepreneurial Case is a print whose scintillating
Recession / print art, which may be life as a
printmaker quilt and Peace Johnson's pro-
cess-driven layered abstract sculptures. Through
February 30 at 860 North Branch Gallery and Sculpture
Park in Denver. Info: 703.9583

HENCH COLEMAN "Hench Coleman/Celebrate Color," part of and with the color pencils opens a delightful into and creative into a life arrested. Through March 20 at Capen/Museum Fine Art Gallery in Sioux Falls 2013. 98.98.

presented

FRANK STELLA: GREEN-LANDSCAPES In celebration of the museum's 25th anniversary presents anniversary of the artist's 10 environmental compositions for his 1965-66 series along with preparatory drawings and other works. Through March 12 at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago. Tel: 312/562-5442, 2002.

JANUARY GROUP SHOW: The same week, the festival will have book signings by *Sherry Coutu* and *Bill Martin* by *Cs writer Goodwin*, replacement award readings by *Donna Johnson*, and novel readings by *Barbara Mainland*. Through February 6 at *AVA Gallery and Arts Center* in *Lubbock, Tex.* 806-768-1000.

JERRY BLAKE "Rain Spoke" painting and installation at the Dartmouth College studio art intern. Through February 7 at Harvard Exhibition. Harvard, Kaplan Center for Museum. N.H. info 603-495-7033.

LAMON PLATEAU & MOUNT CROSS Map of History: paintings by Plateau. With a Family Plateau, oilpaintings depicting scenes such as economic struggling by Cross. LintonPlateau House sculpture, jewelry. Through/playing 2nd at Gallery in the Woods in California. Info: 325-4722

THINKING TIME The world of rock winners presents a traveling exhibition, including traditional and non-traditional binding in water, formal, sculptural structures, modern constructions, headsculptures and sculptural objects. Through March 30 at Baker College Library, Dearborn. Baker College Bookstore, 11100 Dearborn, Dearborn, MI.

TRADITION TRANSFORMED: THAIAN ARTISTS REIMAGINE Contemporary Thai artists use traditional forms in innovative ways to explore themes of technology, social displacement and environmental pollution. Works by a variety of artists by Debra Gaskin, *Quartzes Lensing System* (Kongkarn Lamsan), *Translucent* (Tadok), *Along the River's Edge* and *Phong Phang*. The *South March 21st of April* (Hansmann). *Quartzes* (College of Hansmann, N.H.). *Art* (2021-2022) (2021-2022).

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Peter Arthur Weyrauch His love of cam came first, then cameras. As a kid in the early '60s, the artist had no way that Wileys they really loved him to be tried to count them: off our card. When his dad grabbed a Brownie camera to capture the image — his son lost in a sea of miniature cars — Weyrauch's eyes grew wide. For more than 20 years, he has worked as a commercial and mass-aging photographer throughout the U.S. and Europe, as well as a director of photography for independent and studio films. Recently, though, he returned to his roots, snapping black-and-white images of vintage cars. Risk is all the glimmering choice in his close "R2D2" at Silverd Chevrolet in South Richardson through March 31. (See also "Lost and Found.")



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THE SOCIAL NETWORKER: Director David Fincher and writer Aaron Sorkin tell the story of Mark Zuckerberg and his rise to fame as the founder of Facebook. (R) (10 min) (PG-13) (PG-13)

THE LOST CITY OF ZENITH: The tale of a young boy who is a war orphan. The story is set in a fictional world where a young boy named Zenith is the last of his kind. (PG) (10 min) (PG) (PG)

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ARIES (March 21-April 19) Now and then members of other astrological systems claim that I seem to favor you Aries above them. If that's true, I'm certainly not aware of it. As far as I know, I love all the signs equally. I tell you this, however. Due to the idiosyncrasies of my own personal horoscopes, I "love" been working for years to get more skilled at expressing qualities that your tribe tends to excel at: being direct, acting bravely, knowing exactly what you want, cultivating a willingness to change and leading by example. All these virtues are topics rarely needed by the people in your tribe right now.

TAURUS (April 20-May 21) I've found that true white people are successful in dealing with a long-term, intricate problem, they simply don't cut out most business leaders. Generally they chop away at it, dismantling a little by little; they gradually break it's head with endless small bursts of unexpected blows. Judging from the astrological signs though, I fear that you Taurus are up for a large surge of dismantling. An obstacle you've been hammering away at for months or even years may be promptly crumbled dramatically.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21) My brother Tom and I used to be on a soccer team in Santa Cruz. I played third base and he was the pitcher. For one game he showed up with a new glove that still had the price tag dangling. I asked him if he was going to ship it off. "Nose," he said. "I'd subtly distract the buyers and give me an advantage" that day he pitched one of his best games ever. His pitch seemed to have one great trick that kept the batsmen off balance. When they even aware they were being mislead we'd I don't think so in fact, my theory is that because Tom's trick was so innocuous, no one on the opposing team registered the fact that it was affecting their concentration. I suggest you try a similar strategy Gemini.

CANCER (June 22-July 22) A famous street named Elden Kagan has Incorporated performance art into his crusade against race-baiters. Wielding a handgun he "challenges" to the public who want to avoid the effects of the bapster they experienced as children. The slowness of him that Kagan throws against their forehead is meant to exercise the holy water doused there way back when. Could you benefit from a similar ritual

Concern? If you have any intentions to free yourself from early repression, religious or otherwise you're in a favorable phase to do so.

LED (July 23-Aug. 22) In an old Star Trek episode a woman visits the starship medical facility seeking chemicals she needs to start a hydroponic garden. The chief doctor who has a high sense of self-worth and a gruff bedside manner squats at her. Why is she bothering him with such a trivial request? Now I know how Margaret Thatcher feels. She complains, "When the king needed him to trim a hanger!" [Ancient Greek physician Hippocrates is referred to as the "Father of Medicine" because of his seminal influence on the healing profession.] It is to remind that some time soon you will be in a position similar to this chief doctor. Unlike him, however, you should carry out the assignment with considerable grace. It's off you left in the long run — probably in ways you can't imagine right now.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 23) In Leonard Cohen's song "Requiem" he sings, "There is a crack in everything / That's how the light gets in." From what I can tell, Virgo the week ahead will be one of the best times all year for welcoming the light that comes through the cracks. In fact, I give you to consider widening the cracks — maybe even splitting open a few new cracks — so that the willy healing light can pour down on you in profusion.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23) When was the last time you created a metaphysics, Libra? I'm not necessarily talking about a work of art. It might have been an exquisite dinner you prepared for people you love... or a temporary alliance you forged that allowed you to accomplish the impossible... or an off-plan adventure you missed that turned you also a fiercer hunter being with a more authoritative standing. Whether you last did it first by joined forces with a friend or alone, make it up; your sense it that you're in due for another one. The cosmic rhythms are conspiring to make you all like an artist's genius.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21) Why is everything in this sign going right now? Everything is so weird? Was the momentum built sucked out of your life? Have you lost your way? Personally, I think you're making better than you



Aquarius

(Jan. 20-Feb. 18)

The message of spiritual seek known as the Church of the Subgenius values one treasure above all others: not salvation, not enlightenment, not holiness, but rather **Stuck**. And what's a **Stuck**?

It is a state of being in which everything flows smoothly — a frame of mind so unfettered and at ease that the entire universe just naturally cooperates with you. When you're got abundant reserves of **Stuck**, you don't stress and struggle to make desired events unfold, as if you don't even think you don't really need. You're surrendered to the greater intelligence that guides your life and it provides you with a knack for attracting only what's truly satisfying. **Happy Stuck Week, Aquarius!** I suspect you will have loads of that good stuff, which means your freedom to be a peak what the hell will be at a peak

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21) I've met people Robert Mack and many in my own "Tyranny." His address with many of the fluids of the human body are named with English words at least one-sixth the moisture of a woman who is sexually aroused. The Aquile Stork had been a wild for it, he noted, since which also referred to the lack of moonlight in the water. "The language" Mack concluded, bemoaning a vocabulary that (quote) such an important part of human experience. Your assignment, Sagittarius, is to correct for any problems caused by your language in your own sphere. If you've been busy about articulating your meaning or needs, then please activate your deeper intelligence. If there's a situation in your life that's suffering from a sloppy out of needs rephrasing, its cluttered with cryptic speech. You could even use some new words or borrow good ones from foreign tongues.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19) Stephen (read: Andy) Barker says that when he enters each of his parks, he's thinking that all he needs to do is make it funny enough to get all. More than that, he's in a hurry and he hopes he doesn't get lost. But the one you get these things, he believes, he will always get a lot of work in his chosen profession. In accordance with the astrological rhythms, Capricorn I urge you to adopt a similar approach. To be successful in the coming days, you don't need an approved rating of 80 percent.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20) "I'm pretty gets a rich information at day long that they lose their common sense" said writer Gertrude Stein many decades ago. Isn't that about a frequent lament here in 2013? It takes greatly concentration not to be inundated with data. But that's really your assignment. Prior to its absolute arrival be you in a house of common sense in the coming days. To meet your dates with clarity you will have to be earthly anchored well grounded and in close touch with your body's wisdom. If that message you can't back dramatically on the volume of information you take in, solve it.

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Curses, Foiled Again

When a witness reported that an accused burglar had her and her children, police in New Ariz., knocked on the apartment door of upstairs neighbor Michael Jolley, 55. He answered with his pants still around his ankles. Court records noted he became "increasingly angry" at being interrupted and began cursing at the officers, who arrested him (Phoenix's Arizona Republic).

Police said Jerome Taylor, 38, entered a restaurant in Hartford, Conn., wearing a mask, pulled what looked like gas on the counter and demanded money. The cooks refused and grabbed their knives. Taylor promptly apologized and insisted it was all just a joke, and anyone the "guy" was only at the store (Hartford's WYTH-TV).

Police alerted to the theft of a 60-inch television off a delivery truck in Auburn, Wash., arrested Jonathan Burton, 22, whom they spotted right outside the police station pushing a shopping cart containing the stolen set. (Seattle Post-Intelligencer)

Melodious Mutants

Japanese scientists started breeding mice that sing like birds. The researchers at the University of Osaka genetically engineered the mice as part of their "Musical Mouse Project," which seeks to maintain to see what develops. "We checked the newly born mice one by one," lead researcher Atsuko Uchikawa said. "One day we found a mouse that was singing like a bird!" He explained the "singing mouse" was a random mutation, but that the trait has been used to breed 100 of them so far and will be used to breed more like it. "I was surprised because I had been expecting mice that sing differently in physical shape," Uchikawa said, adding that the project had also produced "a mouse with short limbs and a tail like a beehind!" (Agence France Press)

Drinking-Clums Heroes

Defense attorney Tom Haden helped his client beat 24½ charges after the judge was given several law enforcement videos of Ronald Devens at a DUI stop in Norwalk, Fla. Haden hired a private investigator to videotape an duty law enforcement officers making the same drug/alcohol tests that officers can't use as reasons for suspicious wide turns, causing double yellow lines and redlining law enforcement. After comparing videos, Judge David Devens declared that Devens' defense was sufficient evidence of impaired driving and dismissed the charges. (Norwalk's Herald-Tribune)

A Ukrainian entertainment firm in Des Moines claims now offers drinking buddies for hire. "It is an pleasure company, who can relieve a boring evening," says Yulia Peters, head of Royal Party, which

also organizes weddings and birthdays. "Virtually all of our people are talented. They can play guitar, sing or do anything. Today you may want to talk about art and tomorrow to read Frost!" (Agence France Press)

Reasonable Explanations

When police accused Michael Elms, 38, of half a dozen house burglaries in San Antonio, Texas, he explained he had to keep committing the burglaries so he could afford to pay his attorney \$450 a week to keep him out of jail. (San Antonio's KRAT-TV)

Police who arrested William Linton, 31, from northern Cleveland on suspicion of driving drunk could be explained. "Only Cleveland and his music madness do it" (Cleveland's WJW-TV)

All Runways Lead to Russia

Earth's magnetic north pole is moving toward Russia at the rate of nearly 40 miles a year. Scientists estimate the shift is magnetic changes in the planet's core. One consequence of the shift was the closing of Florida's Tampa International Airport for one week to remedy its own north-south runway to reflect its new magnetic alignment. (The Tampa Tribune)

Bottom-Line Justice

Mississippi Gov. Haley Barbour fired sister Glady and James Scott, who had served 10 years of their life sentences for armed robbery on the condition that Glady, 36, donate a kidney to James, 38, who requires dialysis. Barbour explained he decided in order their release so the state wouldn't have to pay for James Scott's treatment. (Baton Rouge)

The Eyes Have It

Prince Frederic Von Anhalt, 68, the husband of a British taxi driver, glared at eye that when he accidentally grabbed his wife's and glared instead of eye drops. "I was stupid," Von Anhalt said after a doctor at an eye clinic in Beverly Hills, Calif., repaired the damage. Di-hor, 68, suffered a similar eye-squeaky years ago, as looking to her daughter, Princess Hilary, when she mistakenly used "crazy glue" on her eyelashes. (CNN)

Price of Denial

A military jury at Fort Monck, Md., sentenced Lt. Col. Tyrance Linton to six months in military prison and financial from the Army after he disobeyed orders to deploy to Afghanistan because he doubts whether President Barack Obama was born in the United States and therefore questions his eligibility to be commander in chief. He and his would have gladly deployed if Obama's original birth certificate was released and proved authentic. (Associated Press)

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